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Operational activities for development

Triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system

Report of the Secretary-General

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I. Background and context

1. The present report has been prepared in accordance with General Assembly resolutions 50/120 of 20 December 1995 and 52/203 of 18 December 1997 and Economic and Social Council resolution E/1998/L.43. It contains an analysis and assessment of the implementation of policy directives of those resolutions and recommendations of the Secretary-General. The aim of the present report is to review relevant issues arising in the implementation of Assembly resolution 50/120 and related resolutions. To obtain the broadest possible range of views on the issues, questions were submitted to recipient countries, major donor countries, the resident coordinator system at the country level and the organizations and bodies of the United Nations system at their headquarters.[1] One innovation in methodology has been the conduct of impact evaluations, in accordance with paragraph 56 of Assembly resolution 50/120.[2]

2. The current triennial policy review provides an opportunity to chart the course of the operational activities of the United Nations system into the first years of the coming millennium. Although previous reviews (the process was started 20 years ago by the Assembly in its resolution 33/201 of 29 January 1979) have focused on specific operational issues, the current context requires a broader approach. In recent years, the range and diversity of operational activities have increased considerably in response to the growing diversity of situations and demands facing the United Nations system. At the same time, mandates and tasks are being implemented in a more holistic manner as the linkages between the various dimensions of development are better understood. Activities in support of peace, humanitarian assistance, rehabilitation and development are being programmed in a mutually reinforcing way, and on the basis of initiatives supported by ACC under the leadership of the Secretary-General. International conferences that have produced a broad consensus on development goals and policies are being followed up by the system increasingly on the basis of common objectives and coordinated programming at the country level, as described in the report of the Secretary-General on the integrated and coordinated implementation and follow-up of major United Nations conferences and summits (see E/1998/19, sect. II. A), and as reviewed at the Council's session on that topic of 13–15 May 1998, and in Council resolution E/1998/L.42.

3. Development cooperation operates increasingly in a context of interdependence among nations due to globalization and interdependence of such issues as private capital flows, transforming new technologies and communication. Developing countries need United Nations system support and assistance to enhance their capacity to integrate into a globalizing world economy. An underlying priority is poverty eradication, particularly the feminization of poverty, and related economic and social issues, including population, health, food security, education and environmental impact. Cross-cutting themes, such as finance, trade, science and technology and human resource development as well as human rights, gender, children and governance, shape the orientation of nationally determined priorities supported through operational activities for development. Many developing countries are engaged in far-reaching political and economic reforms, and are asking for United Nations system support to that end. Within the system, renewed effort is being made to link research, normative and operational activities. Traditional approaches to technical and financial assistance are being replaced by more flexible approaches based on learned experience that link financial assistance more directly to capacity-building. The system is paying increased attention to upstream policy and advocacy functions, is replacing the project approach with the programme approach, and is supporting, when requested, appropriate forums and mechanisms, such as round tables that facilitate and guide a policy dialogue among the partners in the development process. In so doing, the system is not only contributing to a more effective integration of external assistance with national priorities but is also better able to respond to national requirements in a more effective and comprehensive way. Moreover, the number of countries in special situations has grown. United Nations system intervention in those countries has to be qualitatively different from intervention in societies in a state of relative stability. The role of the United Nations system in countries in transition also requires an approach that is best suited to their specific circumstances and needs.

4. The growing range and complexity of demands for United Nations system operational activities make it increasingly necessary for the United Nations development system to deepen its relations not only with Governments but also with society at large. In particular, the system's effort to contribute to the integrated implementation, at the national level, of global plans of action, combining advocacy with specific operational activities, can only succeed if countries perceive the United Nations development system as an integral instrument in their development effort, which should include strengthened relations of the system with all relevant development constituencies, and has also required the introduction of new and more flexible coordination and programming processes.

5. The heterogeneity of the operational context of development cooperation is increasing, posing the twin challenges to the system of enhancing its flexibility and responsiveness to specific national development requirements, while at the same time enhancing the overall coherence of its operational policies to achieve optimal use of resources and greatest impact. The wide variation in the volume of assistance provided through the system to different countries requires differing approaches and points of entry tailored to each country situation. Initiatives being taken to that end by individual organizations and agencies of the system, as outlined in the present report, are being accompanied by a renewed effort on the part of the system as a whole to adapt its overall approaches to development cooperation in the new international context, and to ensure that the reform processes under way result in a qualitative strengthening of the overall coherence and impact of the United Nations development system. Indeed, many of the major new cross-cutting challenges facing the system do not fall into one stated mandate but rather cut across more than one mandate; they can only be addressed collectively and in a coordinated manner. The review needs to reflect this operational context.

6. An important part of its outcome must be to enable and empower representatives at the country level to be more flexible in the design and delivery of operational activities. The new challenges facing nations and the international community require the organizations of the system to network with a variety of national partners and to adjust policies and programming, as well as methods of working and country-level presence and expertise, to different national requirements.

7. The reform programme encompassing the United Nations as a whole, including its programmes and funds, is beginning to have a major impact on the effectiveness and relevance of United Nations operational activities. Other agencies and organizations are undergoing far-reaching reforms. In addition, they are increasingly engaged in contributing to the effective implementation of the Secretary-General's reform programme, particularly in the practical, day-to-day operational context at the country level. The system is thus in a state of transformation, and can be expected to be better placed to meet a wider range of development challenges in more varied national contexts. The triennial review will need to take fully into account the momentum generated by the reform process, which constitutes a solid platform for achieving greater efficiency, coherence and effectiveness. Moreover, the triennial review will need to take fully into account the cross-cutting issues requiring country-level follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits.

8. There is a clear and urgent need to reverse current declining and stagnant funding trends, particularly in the area of core resources. The note by the Secretary-General entitled "United Nations reform: measures and proposals concerning core resources for development" (A/52/847) contains recommendations on multi-year pledges and other measures. The note indicates that recent trends in core funding are disturbing and may eventually affect the capacity of the United Nations to discharge its development cooperation mandate precisely at a time of broad consensus achieved at the recent cycle of global conferences on the principal dimensions of United Nations system support to national and regional development. The demands placed on operational activities have increased, including (a) capacity-building through institutional and human resource development in strategic sectors and areas of priority to enable developing countries to integrate better into the world economy; (b) translating internationally agreed goals and objectives emerging from conferences into concrete programmes at the country level with poverty eradication as a major underlying objective; (c) helping to establish social safety nets for the most vulnerable groups during periods of economic adjustment; and (d) responding to the new political, humanitarian and socio-economic needs in a growing number of countries. Furthermore, the efficiency, coherence and impact of United Nations system development cooperation would increase markedly with the availability of adequate levels of funding, particularly core resources, which represent the central building block for sustained development support by the system. This is confirmed by the six impact evaluations covered in the next section. Agreement on sustainable funding strategies by the executive boards of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Food Programme (WFP) is vital to the future course of operational activities. It is essential that immediate and effective steps be taken to achieve greater predictability in voluntary funding of core resources.

Recommendations

9. The General Assembly may wish to take note of the considerable progress in the implementation of its resolution 50/120 as concerns improvements in the coherence, effectiveness and efficiency of the operational activities of the United Nations system. The link between implementation of the resolution and the Secretary-General's reform initiatives in operation activities should be recognized. The

General Assembly may wish to identify areas where further progress is required, as indicated in various sections of the present report. In so doing, it may wish to take into account the new and changing context of operational activities, as described in the preceding section, and to encourage further reforms of the operational activities for development of the United Nations system, based on lessons learned and by addressing changes both at headquarters and the country level, bearing in mind that the ultimate impact of these changes must take hold at the country level. Thus, the Assembly may wish to call for measures that can be supported by the requisite resources and support mechanisms to permit their rapid and global implementation. Local requirements for flexibility should be fully respected, and maximum delegation of authority in the application of new measures should be ensured. Further measures should build on progress made and on provisions for a sustained effort to permit change to take hold.

10. The General Assembly may wish to stress the importance of more effective collaboration among all development actors. Thus, collaboration should encompass the programme countries, the United Nations system, including the Bretton Woods institutions, other multilateral and bilateral donors, non-governmental organizations and the private sector. The comparative advantage of the United Nations system, particularly in the formulation of internationally agreed norms and targets and their translation to the country level, should be fully used and synergy within the system should be promoted. The responsibility of the programme country to coordinate external assistance should be recognized at all times, and appropriate capacity-building should be supported by the system, if requested.

11. The General Assembly may wish to address the issue of achieving greater coherence within the system in the provision of policy guidance on programme priorities matters by various intergovernmental bodies. Under the overall guidance of the General Assembly, periodic review of policies adopted in the area of operational activities should be undertaken at the operational activities segment of the Economic and Social Council to ensure the coherence and consistency of policies with the policy guidelines established by the General Assembly in the triennial comprehensive policy review.

12. The General Assembly may wish to take fully into account the current context of operational activities, marked by increasing attention to issues arising from greater globalization and the emergence of a range of cross-cutting issues requiring the development of policies and strategies for a better integration of programme countries into the world economy through capacity-building, including in the areas of finance, trade, science and technology and human resource development, as well as institutional reforms. It may also wish to address policy issues at an upstream stage of development cooperation, including advocacy as mandated as a result of various United Nations conferences. Therefore, the Assembly may wish to endorse measures that lead to greater coherence of the system's response, including effective linkage between research, standard setting and operational dimensions in development cooperation.

13. Intergovernmental bodies, including the Economic and Social Council and the boards of the funds and programmes, could be invited to ensure the complementarity and mutual support of the activities of various organizations, bringing the normative and operational dimensions of operational activities effectively to bear on all national and regional development cooperation activities.

14. The General Assembly may wish to reiterate the importance of coordination among United Nations entities for maximum effectiveness and impact in the implementation of its policy guidelines emerging from the triennial policy review, and may wish to request that actions for implementation, and the initiation of related reporting to be submitted by the Secretary-General should be undertaken in close cooperation and coordination by ACC and its standing committees.

15. Since the triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system is both an event and a process, the General Assembly may wish to call for a sequence of benchmarks for the Secretary-General's reports and Council deliberations in the years 1999 and 2000, in preparation for the next triennial review in 2001. This sequence should be based on (a) the analysis and recommendations on the implementation of policy guidance by the Assembly; (b) the evaluation reports on capacity-building and the eradication of poverty; (c) identification of effective responses to new and emerging issues. In accordance with the request of the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 1998/42, the following possible themes are being suggested for the consideration of the General Assembly and for an eventual discussion at the Council's working-level meetings of operational activities segment for the years 1999, 2000 and 2001. Undoubtedly, these themes will need to be reviewed in the light of the outcome of the triennial policy review at the organizational sessions of the Council. Both in 1999 and 2000, the Council will receive an annual report of the Secretary-General on operational activities that will take fully into account the provisions of the recently adopted Council resolution 1998/27 on reporting of the United Nations funds and programmes to the Economic and Social

Council. In addition, in each year, a progress report should be provided on the implementation of key provisions of General Assembly resolutions 47/199, 50/120 and the upcoming resolution on the triennial policy on issues, covering such areas as resources, strategic frameworks and programming, field-level coordination, capacity-building and national execution, as well as the role of operational activities in humanitarian assistance, rehabilitation, peace-building and development. Increasingly, these reports should also provide the results of impact evaluation studies that deal with results achieved in supporting national implementation of follow-up to United Nations conferences and summits through operational activities. In 1999, it might be desirable to provide a first set of results achieved in the area of gender in development and poverty eradication. In 2000, other areas might be retained, including human development and sustainable development. The theme for the year 2001 should focus on forward-looking perspectives of development cooperation, with a focus on identifying new and emerging dimensions of development cooperation within the United Nations system.

16. All measures called for in the triennial review by the General Assembly should become part of a management plan prepared under the authority of the Secretary-General in consultation with the United Nations system. It should include appropriate monitoring mechanisms, including through appropriate intergovernmental bodies, and should identify evaluation and monitoring reports as inputs to the Secretary-General's annual report to the Economic and Social Council on operational activities, as mentioned in paragraph 15 above.

17. Bearing in mind its role in relation to the Economic and Social Council, the specialized agencies and the executive boards of the United Nations funds and programmes, the General Assembly may wish to request other intergovernmental bodies concerned to address the implementation of its resolution and to provide information to the Secretary-General for inclusion in the report on the implementation of General Assembly policy guidelines to be submitted to the Council, as indicated above.

II. Impact of operational activities[3]

18. In accordance with paragraph 56 of General Assembly resolution 50/120, six evaluations were undertaken to address (a) the impact of United Nations system support on capacity-building of national processes and organizations between 1980 and 1995; (b) the evolving ability of the United Nations system to develop common approaches to priority issues; (c) the learning of lessons on how issues of building capacity for development can be addressed; and (d) the continuing need to refine evaluations and – where necessary – monitoring to serve the ever-widening scope of operational activities. This was a first attempt to assess the impact of operational activities on a system-wide basis.[4] Three evaluations focused on capacity-building in basic health and education; the other three focused on capacity-building related to transfer of technology, peace-building and environment.

19. The reports show that capacity-building evolved both as a concept and in practice between 1980 and 1995, and the evaluation criteria need to reflect that evolution. Originally called "institution-building" it meant improving individual public sector organizations through training and transfer of techniques. By the mid-1990s, a broader concept, "capacity development", defined such organizations as parts of larger systems that needed improvement.

20. The evaluations point to a sense of instability and fragility permeating much of the public sector, which was often no longer the principal deliverer of social services. They show that effective national development depends heavily on the effectiveness of a country's organizational infrastructure, and that the inability to implement plans and programmes effectively could nullify the impact of sound strategies and policies. Thus, capacity development is no longer seen as being subsumed under other project and programme objectives but instead is being identified as a specific objective requiring the dedication of resources to achieve it.

21. Traditional factors that according to the evaluation reports enable the United Nations system to have an impact in this area include its perceived independence, impartiality and balance in its handling of issues. Because of the continuity of its presence at the country level, the United Nations system develops an understanding of evolving circumstances that helps it to adapt its approaches. More recently, the United Nations system has been acting locally as a convenor of various development partners to help address capacity-building issues, complementing its role as a forum for Member States on global issues, in particular follow-up to global conferences.

22. The reports confirm that the degree of coherence and collaboration within the United Nations system can be a crucial factor for positive impact, particularly if several organizations are involved, as on such issues as health or human resource development. This fact notwithstanding, the experience in building capacity in the telecommunication sector in one country demonstrates that high quality

technical support from a small technical agency can have a very considerable positive impact on the development of a country. In general, the evaluations suggest that operational activities are effective in handling cross-cutting issues, such as capacity-building where the organizations of the United Nations system work with the Government on a common set of goals, mutual expectations and limits, which gives their technical competence and advocacy roles an opportunity to be most effective.

23. Among the other factors identified by the reports that account for the varying levels of impact of the United Nations system are (a) civil and political stability; (b) appropriate degrees of decentralization or centralization of national capacity; (c) technological specificity in the capacity required and degree of competition affecting the institutions or entities concerned; (d) ability of countries to deal overall with the effects of policy reform; (e) national ownership; and (f) an effective analysis of the requirements to develop fully operational capacity. Of these factors, (a) and (e) appear to be of particular relevance.

24. Reasons for lack of positive impact identified by the evaluations include proliferation of effort over too many projects; pressure to undertake projects recommended by individual entities with the United Nations system, with the number and diversity of proposals going beyond the country's managerial capacity; and failure to build sustainability into project design and transfer ownership and accountability. The picture presented by the evaluation reports is more complex, and shows a variability not reported separately by resident coordinators, specialized agencies and individual funds and programmes in their responses for the present report.

25. Impact was seen in different forms, time-frames and levels, reflecting both the diversity of areas for which Governments sought United Nations system support and the changes in the concept of capacity-building, as well as the way United Nations support to capacity-building has evolved. In six countries examined by the evaluation reports, some positive impact was found in all, though to differing degrees.

26. One evaluation showed that there was an evolution from direct support to institutions to capacity-building through policy advocacy. Although the latter is more difficult to evaluate in terms of specific outcomes, it nevertheless exemplified an important area of assistance by the United Nations system. Other evaluations showed that United Nations system support helped to translate internationally agreed concepts into national policy and helped to readjust capacity-building to meet new and changing policy environments. In one case, institutional capacity developed with United Nations system support was eventually bypassed as new approaches to health programmes were being introduced. However, the United Nations system was able to adjust its operational activities to help empower local initiatives to manage community-based health services.

27. One evaluation found that capacity-building support to meet the changing needs of telecommunications had considerable positive impact. Moreover, with a small amount of funding, the United Nations system helped to bring the country into the world informatics market and the multiplier effect was extraordinary. One essential lesson, which has broad implications, emerges very clearly from that dynamic experience. In that country, support was given to creating different parts of a parastatal telecommunications institution to meet the growing needs of the sector. The institution served its purpose, and eventually developed into other institutions suited to meet evolving requirements.

28. Another evaluation found that the United Nations system helped to set up institutions, such as the national ombudsman, civil police academy and public security. However, those institutions are still fragile and are just beginning their own process of development. To ensure the full development of this capacity for the protection of human rights, justice, and public security, sufficient support and time will be required.

29. In one country, it was judged that the majority of capacities developed with United Nations system support had yet to demonstrate clear impact. Concern was raised over the administrative burden on the Government imposed by the large number of projects supported by the United Nations system. Moreover, only two of the agencies involved in the country were judged to have systematic documentation of initiatives and lessons learned to allow institutional memory. Indeed, that absence of an adequate institutional memory at the country level was brought out by several other evaluations: where key data are not systematically collected, analysed and the results fed into programming, an assessment of impact becomes very difficult. Although the evaluation found some impact on the development of strategic capacities at the national level, the overall cost-effectiveness of United Nations system support to capacity-building was judged as not having been established.

30. The evaluation reports show that United Nations system activities were able to prepare conditions for larger programmes to be implemented (for examples of the role of the United Nations system in innovation, testing and

demonstration, which illustrate the multiplier effect of operational activities, see the paper mentioned in footnote 3).

31. The evaluations show that a major factor for achieving positive and sustainable results is the availability of a critical mass of financial resources in order for the national programmes which the United Nations system is supporting to be effective. As more than one report notes, having recorded the achievements of United Nations system support to national capacity-building, capacities so created are vulnerable to resource uncertainties. This holds regardless of whether these resources come from within the United Nations system, or from national or other external sources.

32. In conclusion, the pilot impact evaluations suggest that United Nations system support to capacity-building has had a positive impact in the selected sample. That impact is often direct and immediate but sometimes, subtle, diverse and long-term, and noticeable only as changes set in motion. The conduct of the six evaluations provides the basis for a more in-depth analysis of a larger sample with more refined techniques.

Recommendations

33. This pilot exercise has produced useful results and should be repeated on a more extensive scale covering a larger sample of countries.

34. All major capacity-building programmes supported by any parts of the United Nations development system should have simple explicit indicators of performance as well as baseline data built into the programme before being approved.

35. Capacity-building requires a more systematic approach within the United Nations system. Among the steps needed is for the system to agree on country-level targets and indicators. This will require dedicated work by subject and country specialists, and should be linked to the country strategy note/UNDAF processes. Programmes dealing with advocacy should be particularly explicit about the national, regional or local capacities that they are endeavouring to support or expand.

III. Follow-up to global conferences and the role of the resident coordinator system

36. It should be recalled that in paragraph 39 of General Assembly resolution 50/120, the Assembly reaffirmed the important role of the resident coordinator system in the follow-up to United Nations conferences and summits. At its recent special session in May 1998, the Economic and Social Council reviewed progress in this respect, including on the basis of a separate report (E/1998/19) on the integrated and coordinated implementation and follow-up of major United Nations conferences and summits prepared in response to Council resolution 1997/61, with a special focus on country-level implementation. The resident coordinator system is increasingly focusing on integrating the follow-up to global conferences in differing national contexts. The analysis of responses from the field contained in addendum 1 to the present report (A/53/226/Add.1) indicates that the resident coordinator system is devoting a large part of its attention to this subject task. It may be helpful in future to focus evaluation studies on the link between global conferences, the resident coordinator system and results achieved at the country level. Furthermore, the mid-term reviews of the various conferences are providing a comprehensive picture of results achieved. The impact studies carried out in the context of the preparation of the present report indicate linkages in this respect.

37. Governments are the key actors in the implementation of global conferences, and the United Nations system has a supportive role to play as a facilitator, especially through the resident coordinator system, promoting policy dialogue and linking it with the programming of operational activities for development. A key concern in implementing conferences is to take into account country-specific situations and national priorities, as well as the specific mandates and capacity of each United Nations system organization. Therefore, a first important step of programming United Nations system support is increasingly a situation analysis conducted by the resident coordinator system and the Government which deals with how national policies and priorities support conferences goals and with the effectiveness of the institutional mechanisms for follow-up and monitoring. The introduction of the common country assessments can facilitate that task.

38. Thematic groups are a main instrument for coordinated United Nations system support for conferences implementation by the Government. Such groups are being established in many countries. However, their capacity to

facilitate a coordinated approach to follow-up to global conferences varies, in particular their capacity to address cross-cutting themes of conferences. ACC has called upon the United Nations system to utilize fully mechanisms, such as the country strategy note and UNDAF, to support the development of national strategies and action plans for integrated conferences implementation based on national priorities. The country strategy note and UNDAF represent important opportunities to establish links between programming instruments and implementation of conference goals. The critical need for relevant indicators to monitor the implementation of conferences at the country level should also be emphasized, and should be integrated in the use of such tools as the common country assessment, the country strategy note and UNDAF, in coordination with the efforts that the United Nations system and other international organizations are making in this area.

39. Lack of financial resources and limited national capacities remain major obstacles to the follow-up to global conferences at the national level in many countries. Capacity-building initiatives are thus a main priority. Guidelines of ACC task forces and ACC guidance for the follow-up to global conferences are useful tools for enhancing the efforts undertaken by United Nations country teams for conference implementation. The annual reports of the resident coordinators could be used more fully as a monitoring tool and to disseminate best practices. Partnership and cooperation between the United Nations system and the Bretton Woods institutions is being further enhanced in conference follow-up, in close consultation with the Government.

Recommendations

40. Operational activities should be increasingly focused on providing support in the coordinated follow-up to global conferences. Internationally agreed strategies and targets should be integrated into operational activities, as determined by each programme country. The effective integration of gender issues and other key cross-cutting issues into operational activities (including social impact assessment through such mechanisms as the common country assessments introduced by the United Nations funds and programmes) and the establishment of common databases should become a priority. Progress made in these areas should be reviewed periodically.

41. National capacity should be developed, where required, to ensure follow-up to global conferences. As indicated in the recommendations on funding and resources, the required funding must be made available to enable operational activities to support national and regional action in follow-up to global conferences.

42. The tools for the resident coordinator system and operational activities for the coordinated follow-up to conferences should be implemented fully and their use assessed periodically. These tools should support the policy functions of the system at the country level, and should serve to carry out social impact assessments and other activities for the elaboration of collaborative programmes.

43. In order to facilitate a coordinated follow-up to global conferences at the country level, the resident coordinator system should promote, in collaboration with national Governments and other development partners, a coherent framework for conference follow-up, as well as any other advocacy responsibilities. The framework should include the preparation of joint situation analyses and the establishment of necessary monitoring mechanisms that identify relevant indicators and capacity-building requirements. These mechanisms should be harmonized with system-wide tools, such as the common country assessment, the country strategy note and UNDAF, in order to create a link between the implementation of global conferences and programming of operational activities of the United Nations system.

IV. Gender perspective

44. In accordance with paragraph 7 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1998/42 and bearing in mind the outcome of the high-level part of the operational activities segment of the Council, the present section deals with mainstreaming a gender perspective in the operational activities of the United Nations system. The report of the Secretary-General entitled "Advancement of women: implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the role of operational activities in promoting, in particular, capacity-building and resource mobilization for enhancing the participation of women in development" (E/1998/54 and Corr. 1) provides an assessment of the current situation with respect to mainstreaming gender in operational activities. In particular, it reflects the responses received from various development partners, including Governments, the resident coordinator system and agencies of the system, during the preparation of the triennial comprehensive policy review. The responses indicate that gender programming and gender activities have progressed to different levels, and that further progress is essential.

45. The report also highlights the practical relationship of the gender mainstreaming strategy of the United Nations

system with various approaches and modalities, including the country strategy note, UNDAF, the common country assessment, monitoring and evaluation, staff training and resource mobilization strategies. The preliminary assessment of the introduction of the UNDAF concept reveals that it can provide an opportunity to facilitate a focus on gender issues by each participating organization. It should also be noted that at the ACC level, gender mainstreaming is receiving increased attention by the resident coordinator system through an ACC guidance note on field-level follow-up to global conferences developed by CCPOQ. Although it was not possible, within the deadlines for finalization of the present report, to obtain updated information on funding by the United Nations system for gender activities, preliminary information is provided in the report submitted to the Council (see E/1998/48 and Corr.1 and Add.1). Moreover, in its report to its Executive Board on successor programming arrangements of 8 July 1998 (DP/1998/34), UNDP notes that although only three per cent of programme outlines focus specifically on gender, it is nonetheless an important secondary focus area for most programmes where the primary focus is on poverty, governance or environment. Gender concerns are emphasized in most programmes at both the institutional and the grass-roots levels.

Recommendations

46. The General Assembly may wish to take note of Economic and Social Council resolution 1998/26 and thus to reaffirm the importance of operational activities for development in assisting developing countries to implement the commitments of the Beijing Platform for Action.

47. The General Assembly may also wish to call on the United Nations system to increase its efforts to incorporate a gender perspective into all operational activities, particularly within their poverty eradication activities, and to ensure the availability of funding sources for such programmes.

48. The General Assembly may further wish to stress the role of the resident coordinator system in incorporating a gender perspective in the programming and implementation of operational activities and undertaking joint monitoring and evaluations to measure progress in this area. The General Assembly may also wish to call on the United Nations system to provide periodic progress reports, based on monitoring and evaluation, which will provide comprehensive information to the Council and the Assembly in the context of the next triennial review on the accomplishment of the targets set in the Platform for Action.

V. Civil society

49. Links with civil society and the private sector are growing. Non- state actors, non-governmental organizations, the private corporate sector, academia and the scientific community are essential to effective economic and social development, locally and internationally, and are increasingly so regarded. The United Nations development system is presently cooperating with non-state constituencies far more broadly and deeply than ever before. In turn, those entities are becoming more active in the execution and implementation of United Nations system-aided activities, as agents of change and as conduits for global goals. In keeping with paragraph 24 of Assembly resolution 50/120, United Nations system capacity-building is increasingly oriented to assist and make use of those non-state actors, which has consequences for the relevance and operational viability of current approaches and practices.

50. As part of the response of the United Nations system to a Government's wish to strengthen the capacity of civil society and national non-governmental organizations that are engaged in development activity, the resident coordinator system could review, in close consultation with the Government, the requirements of non-State actors that may need technical and substantive strengthening, including their legal status, and appropriate approaches for their involvement. Adopting such an approach could be another major contribution towards decentralization and delegation of authority, in line with the Secretary-General's reform programme.

Recommendations

51. Operational activities should contribute to enhancing links with civil society, non-governmental organizations and the private sector in carrying out development programmes as agreed with the host country. The inherent flexibility and adaptability of operational activities should be enhanced in this regard, based on learned experience and with a view to facilitating alliances to seek new and innovative solutions to development problems.

52. The United Nations system should continue to expand its relations with national and international elements of civil society, consistent with the desires of Governments, in order to broaden the participation of all relevant groups in development. United Nations entities should give particular attention to assistance for capacity-building of local bodies.

VI. Regional dimensions

53. As mandated, operational activities focus primarily on the country level. The vast proportion of those activities is organized within individual countries. A relatively small proportion (10 to 15 per cent in terms of total resources) is undertaken at the regional and subregional levels. Although relatively small in financial terms, those regional and subregional operational activities offer broader perspectives and open up new opportunities for generating productive forms of multilateral action, especially important to transboundary development cooperation and for peace-building. The United Nations system has important comparative advantages in this respect: its objectivity; neutrality and acceptability in dealing with sensitive questions, particularly important when managing intercountry issues; its access to intersectoral resources and global and regional databases; its systems of grant funding; its role in setting norms and standards on a global and regional scale; and its growing intercountry technical support and managerial structures.

54. Regional and subregional development cooperation offers a range of opportunities for enhancing the development prospects of individual countries. The growing technical capacity of the United Nations system at the subregional level offers substantive and technical support to operational activities at the country level. United Nations organizations have established a varied pattern of relationships with subregional and regional intergovernmental organizations with the aim of finding common solutions to complex transboundary development problems. There is an expanding prospect for technical cooperation among developing countries, on which a separate report will be submitted to the General Assembly at its next session. There continues to be a need to achieve greater complementarity between country and intercountry activities, as well as improved coordination of intercountry operational activities.

55. In accordance with paragraph 20 of Assembly resolution 50/120, attention is being given to the need to strengthen the regional aspect of United Nations development support. Analysis shows that regional dimensions of operational activities are not sufficiently linked to the country level at the stage of developing programme frameworks or in implementing programmes and projects. Current evidence indicates that there should be improved information exchange on intercountry activities within the resident coordinator system, greater involvement by national authorities, and better mechanisms to obtain access to technical capacities of United Nations organizations at the subregional and regional levels. Similarly, at the intercountry levels there could be greater exchange of information among the United Nations system organizations and greater transparency in their programming activities. A more coordinated approach to United Nations system cooperation with subregional and regional intergovernmental bodies would also be desirable. A separate report to the Economic and Social Council on regional cooperation in the economic, social and related fields (E/1998/65 and Add.1-3) gives attention to some aspects of the matter.

Recommendations

56. The General Assembly may wish to reaffirm the importance of the regional dimension in development cooperation as an integral part of the operational activities of the United Nations system. Efforts should be undertaken to ensure that this dimension is taken into account when formulating national strategies and programmes, thus taking advantage of the potential of intercountry and regional cooperation and economies of scale. The Assembly may also wish to take note of the outcome of the substantive session of 1998 of the Economic and Social Council on the review by the Council of the regional commissions, as mandated by General Assembly resolutions 50/227 and 52/12 B, as contained in its agreed conclusions.

57. The resident coordinator system should give greater attention to intercountry aspects of the work of the United Nations system, bearing in mind the regional and subregional settings of host countries and the substantive competences of United Nations agencies, whether or not locally represented. Greater emphasis should be placed on complementarity and coordination of efforts within the United Nations system, and on linkage with relevant intergovernmental bodies. Regional and subregional capabilities of the United Nations regional commissions, funds and programmes, and specialized agencies should be more closely associated with the resident coordinator system and with programming mechanisms, such as UNDAF.

58. Further intergovernmental deliberations on the role of the United Nations regional commissions in operational activities should aim at maximum effectiveness of the system at all levels of activity.

VII. Resources and funding

59. Concessionary resource flows to developing countries have reached a critical stage: instead of moving towards the

globally agreed target of 0.7 per cent, they are in a state of steady decline at a time of increasing needs and demands. In nominal terms, official development assistance (ODA) from Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)/Development Assistance Committee (DAC) countries has declined from US$ 60.5 billion in 1994 to $59.7 billion in 1995 and $58.2 billion in 1996, representing a significant decline in real terms. Although ODA has declined, other types of resource flows to developing countries have increased, reducing the share of ODA in total net resource flows to only 22 per cent in 1996, as compared with a share of 64 per cent in 1994. The problem with those primarily market-directed flows is that they are largely confined to only a few developing countries that have the capacity to attract foreign investments and loans. Most low-income developing countries, in particular the least developed countries and countries in Africa, have not gained from private flows and have been adversely affected by the decline of ODA. Their problems have been further exacerbated by the burden of debt repayments, for which a lasting solution is being sought.

60. The activities of the United Nations system in many recipient countries have been affected in recent years by the marked decline of the share of ODA in total resource flows. Moreover, as shown in table B-1 of the statistical addendum to the present report (A/53/226/Add.2), the share of the United Nations system development grants in declining total ODA has dropped in nominal terms from about 8 per cent ($4.9 billion) in 1993 to less than 7.5 per cent ($4.3 billion) in 1996. As shown in table B-6, the share of United Nations specialized and technical agencies within total United Nations system grant assistance dropped from 26 per cent ($1.3 billion) in 1993 to about 19 per cent ($0.9 billion) in 1996. The preliminary report for 1997 will become available in September 1998; however, there is an indication that the trends of stagnation and decline have continued. Resources to fund activities at the country level through the United Nations system vary from 1 per cent of total external aid to 100 per cent; on average, it is below 10 per cent of external assistance. Such wide variations have an important effect on the points of entry for the United Nations system interventions, their role and character, the influence it can wield in policy and advocacy, and in the types of partnerships that it can build with other development partners. Resource levels are a key ingredient in the efficiency and effectiveness of United Nations operational activities. The fragility and inadequacy of United Nations development resources are, therefore, a matter of concern. The United Nations system is expected to play a role qualitatively distinct from other external development partners, and its unique and lead role in many circumstances is affected by growing resource constraints. The decline of resources available to the United Nations system for operational activities targeted on development is a particularly negative and disturbing trend that would affect the continuing dynamic process of development cooperation and the pursuit of global compacts.

61. Official development assistance (ODA) and contributions to the United Nations system should be seen within the broader framework of financial flows to developing countries. There has been a radical shift in the overall financial flows, with market-mediated investment and lending flows increasing dramatically and with significant decreases in official flows. ODA itself has undergone a change in its traditional paradigm, with the focus now largely on poverty-related assistance, rather than filling financial gaps in the balance of payments and government budgets of developing countries.

62. ODA has many components, and each component has an important rationale attached to it. A large part of ODA is now disbursed in the form of grants, although there is still a highly significant proportion of ODA being disbursed as loans and credits, both by bilateral and multilateral organizations. Within the ODA system and also within the multilateral system, the United Nations is unique for its almost exclusive focus on grant-funding. Such assistance is, therefore, particularly critical at a time of heavy debt burdens carried by many developing countries, including the poorest amongst them. The United Nations system has led the way in bringing about the paradigm change to focus on poverty and sustainable patterns of development, and creating the national capacity needed to address those issues at the same time shaping the global agendas for new approaches to development cooperation. Current declining trends of resources available to the United Nations system may have a damaging effect on the positive contribution that is sought through the new development paradigm. The total amount available to the United Nations system for operational activities for development in the last three years in nominal terms has remained stagnant and has declined in real terms, as follows: $5.5 billion in 1994, $5.5 billion in 1995 and $5.4 billion in 1996. Moreover, as indicated in the statistical addendum (A/53/226/Add.2), there is a trend towards increased earmarked funding of operational activities for development.

63. As a response to Assembly resolutions 50/227, 52/12 B, and 52/203, the executive boards of United Nations funds and programmes have reviewed their current funding arrangements, and have developed proposals for arresting and reversing the decline of core and non-core resources

received by them. As recognized by the Assembly in its resolution 52/203, the fundamental strengths of United Nations operational activities for development are to be found in their universal, voluntary and grant nature, their neutrality and their multilateralism. Within those parameters, proposals have been developed to facilitate the flow of resources on a predictable, continuous, and assured basis (for a more extensive discussion of these issues, see A/52/847).

Recommendation

64. The General Assembly may wish to give special attention to, and act, as appropriate, on the conclusion of the consideration of funding strategies by the executive boards of the funds and programmes to reverse the declining trend in core resources. The General Assembly may also wish to reaffirm the importance of core resources, while also recognizing the increased relevance of non-core and other sources of funding of operational activities. It may further wish to consider how best to attract resources from new donors and private sources. The General Assembly may also wish to indicate the importance, in mobilizing resources, of demonstrating the results and impact of operational activities.

VIII. Strategic frameworks and programming

65. The operational activities of the United Nations system are conceived and designed with the objective of contributing to national development. The General Assembly has stressed that national plans and priorities constitute the only viable frame of reference for the national programming of operational activities, and that programmes should be based on such development plans and priorities and should therefore be country-driven. It has also emphasized the importance of national plans in implementing the outcomes of, and commitments entered into at global conferences and the role of United Nations operational activities in supporting such implementation. Moreover, in its resolutions 47/199 and 50/120 the Assembly emphasized the imperative of integrating the United Nations system's work at the country level into national policies, plans and programmes. Programming tools and modalities, such as the country strategy note, the programme approach and national execution, have interconnected dual purposes: (a) to facilitate closer collaboration within the United Nations system, and (b) to integrate coordinated work into national processes. Available evidence indicates that the United Nations system has been more successful in the direction of the former objective than the latter. By and large, the United Nations development system is working more coherently, but further progress still could be made to link its operational activities to national programmes.

66. In its resolutions 47/199 and 50/120, the General Assembly provided directives for better coordination of United Nations system operational activities and their better integration into national development, through the use of a strategic framework for programming and by achieving greater coherence by the system in response to national objectives and priorities. The Secretary-General's reforms have given a major impulse to the achievement of that goal through UNDAF, complementing the country strategy note, where it exists. Common country assessments are a key step in formulating those strategic frameworks.

Recommendation

67. The General Assembly may wish to call for the full implementation of its resolutions 47/199 and 50/120, particularly those provisions in the area of programming that are aimed at closer integration of United Nations system support with national strategies and programmes.

A. Country strategy note

68. Of 90 countries that expressed an interest in pursuing the country strategy note, 33 have completed the process. Since the country strategy note is a voluntary exercise which requires the Government's endorsement, its preparation and approval depend to a large extent on a stable political and economic situation prevailing in the country, as well as the timing of national development planning. The slow start of the country strategy note process was often affected by those factors.

69. When the country strategy note formulation process has been based on broad consultation of the relevant partners, it has contributed to policy dialogue and exchange of information with host Governments and among system organizations, leading to better coordination. However, the involvement of national authorities and some parts of the United Nations system in the formulation of the country strategy notes has not always been adequate. Current indications are that the country strategy note, in several cases, has tended to be a single event with limited long-term impact on the coordination of United Nations system activities, particularly when follow-up and monitoring mechanisms were not clearly spelled out. Only a few countries have indicated that the country strategy notes are

being updated, although the information available is limited in this area. The added value of the country strategy note process cannot be considered as having been clearly established in all cases, and the slow introduction of the country strategy note and its adoption by a relatively small number of countries has limited its usefulness as a standard framework for programming.

Recommendations

70. The General Assembly may wish to take note of the relationship of the country strategy note and UNDAF, where they both exist. It may wish to reaffirm its resolutions 47/199 and 50/120 concerning the optional use of the country strategy note by interested countries. It may also wish to indicate that where the country strategy note exists, it should serve as the basis for the preparation of the UNDAF and should ensure compatibility with the country strategy note.

71. In countries where the country strategy note has been adopted, resident coordinators should support the national Government's efforts to monitor the implementation of the country strategy note. Resident coordinators should also encourage the revision of adopted country strategy notes to ensure the integration of United Nations system operations with national priorities and enhance the development impact of United Nations system support.

B. United Nations Development Assistance Framework

72. As a part of his reform proposals of 14 July 1997 (see A/51/950, paras. 50 and 160-161, and action 10), the Secretary-General requested all United Nations funds and programmes to develop UNDAF as a framework for ensuring that the individual country programmes of the funds and programmes are based on common objectives and harmonized time-frames. The aim is to achieve goal-oriented collaboration, programmatic coherence and mutual reinforcement. That initiative responds to the provisions of paragraph 14 of General Assembly resolution 50/120.

73. UNDAFs are being piloted in 18 countries, with the support of the United Nations Development Group (UNDG).[4] The pilot phase will be assessed later in 1998. Only preliminary lessons of the pilot phase will be available in time for the triennial review by the General Assembly. Although UNDAF initially covered only the funds and programmes, the Secretary-General has invited other parts of the United Nations system to participate in the process, and system-wide implications of UNDAF are currently being considered within CCPOQ. In several countries, agencies are currently cooperating with the funds and programmes in the formulation of UNDAFs. Consultations with the Bretton Woods institutions are also envisaged, including through interfacing with the World Bank country assistance strategy.

74. As described in greater detail in addendum 1 to the present report (A/53/226/Add.1), the preparation of UNDAF entails collaborative programming and close consultation with Governments, including compatibility with country strategy notes where they exist. To that end, continued efforts are required to harmonize country programmes, and strengthen cooperation with various partners. Practical measures are being adopted by the resident coordinator system to harmonize the two processes. Member States are generally supportive of UNDAF although they have expressed differing views about the relationship between UNDAF and the country strategy note process, and some have expressed the need for simplification. Several Governments indicated in their responses that the UNDAF process should ensure the active involvement of national authorities and relevant stakeholders, as well as all specialized agencies of the system, including the Bretton Woods institutions. However, although an evaluation of the UNDAF process is premature, the forthcoming assessment of the UNDAF pilot phase will shed further light on this matter and will identify areas for further action.

Recommendations

75. The General Assembly may wish to take note of the pilot stage of UNDAF and the preliminary assessment of the provisional guidelines conducted by UNDG in consultation with Governments and organizations of the United Nations system. The General Assembly may also wish to reaffirm the goal of enhanced coherence in programming as contained in paragraph 14 of resolution 50/120.

76. In conducting further UNDAFs, particular attention should be paid to (a) ownership of the UNDAF process through full consultation of Governments in its preparation; (b) collaborative programming within the framework of UNDAF, reflecting the strengths and mandates of each participating organization; (c) joint monitoring and evaluation within the framework of UNDAF. UNDAF should lead to more coherence and effectiveness of the United Nations system in carrying out a coordinated follow-up to global conferences.

77. In the context of the next triennial policy review of operational activities for development, the Secretary-General should report on his assessment of UNDAF as an instrument to achieve United Nations system goal-oriented

collaboration at the country level. In particular, it will be important to assess the value of UNDAF in harmonizing country programmes and promoting policy dialogue and consultation with all relevant development partners, and its capacity in providing a consistent United Nations response to an authoritative statement of national requirements.

C. Programme approach

78. The experience of applying the programme approach shows that recipient Governments are generally committed to this modality. It has been especially applied to sectoral areas, and has been subject to varying interpretations by United Nations system organizations, depending mostly on individual agency policies and procedural provisions with respect to programming.

79. Although there is a trend to introduce the programme approach in all recipient countries, its full implementation has not yet been achieved. In some countries, difficulties encountered in the use of the programme approach were due to weak institutional and human resources, although the Government may have indicated a strong interest in pursuing this approach. The application of the country strategy note and UNDAF can facilitate the use of the programme approach. There continues to be a need to support national entities to facilitate the effective implementation of the programme approach.

Recommendation

80. The General Assembly may wish to reaffirm that the concept of the programme approach be applied whenever feasible. The programme approach should facilitate the integration of development activities supported by various partners under national management and with a focus on results and outputs.

D. Harmonization and simplification of programming

81. In its resolution 50/120 and preceding resolutions, the General Assembly has called for simplification and harmonization of rules and procedures as a means to facilitate the integration of United Nations system activities into national development programmes, and to facilitate collaboration among United Nations system organizations. The present review confirms again the burden placed on many countries, including country offices, by the complex and diverse rules and procedures governing programming within the system, and the urgent need to introduce further simplification, particularly in programming. The introduction of UNDAFs provides an opportunity to work on the basis of a common database and common country assessments. This should serve to promote further steps within the system aimed at simplification in programming and contribute to the eventual development of a more streamlined and collaborative United Nations system development cooperation programme cycle.

Recommendations

82. Greater progress should be made in the harmonization and simplification of the procedures of the United Nations system in operational activities, as already called for by the Assembly in its resolutions 47/199 and 50/120. To facilitate the use of the country strategy note and UNDAF as a framework for programming, steps should be taken to continue to harmonize programming cycles over the duration of a cycle and to streamline the preparation of programmes. Whenever feasible, country programmes or their equivalent should be presented to the Boards in a coordinated fashion by the funds and programmes, together with the approved country strategy note and UNDAF, where applicable.

83. The simplification of planning and administrative procedures within the United Nations system should involve consultations with other donors with a view to assessing their concerns and interest in this area. A report on the harmonization subject could be considered by the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 1999 or 2000.

84. Greater simplification and harmonization of procedures for designing, programming, implementing and monitoring operational activities of United Nations system organizations should be ensured to strengthen field-level coordination and increase the effectiveness of United Nations development support. In particular, the country strategy note, UNDAF, common country assessment and other frameworks adopted by the United Nations system should be reviewed in order to verify their consistency and harmonization as part of one cooperation programming cycle with a view to simplifying procedures and avoiding duplications.

IX. Monitoring, evaluation and accountability

85. In General Assembly resolution 50/120 and subsequent Economic and Social Council resolutions, notably Council

resolution 1996/42, the United Nations system was called on to ensure improvements in monitoring; coordinate programme reviews and evaluations; apply lessons learned systematically to build evaluation criteria into all projects and programmes and promote national evaluation capacity; and provide the Economic and Social Council with information on evaluation activities that is quantifiable and comparable. All funds, programmes and agencies of the United Nations development system were urged to identify measurable targets for strengthening their monitoring and evaluation capabilities, to incorporate those targets in plans to implement Assembly resolution 50/120, and to cooperate in the development of monitoring and evaluation methodologies.

86. The system is responding to the guidance from the General Assembly and other intergovernmental bodies on issues of monitoring and evaluation in carrying out joint evaluations. A few agencies have reported activities in support of developing national evaluation capacity. Continued attention to this area of operational activities appears to be necessary.

87. The system's response to the need for established targets as called for in Council resolution 1996/42 has been too limited. Also, movement towards holding joint programme reviews rather than separate exercises has been slow, although the introduction of UNDAF may encourage at least the funds and programmes to move in this direction. Information on achievements in terms of impact and effectiveness has been provided by only a few United Nations organizations. Moreover, United Nations organizations report results in different ways, reflecting the variations in mandates, working methods and roles that exist within the United Nations development system.

88. Overall, while there is reporting of results, this is not done in the comparable terms requested in Council resolution 1996/42. There continue to exist methodological problems of measurement and quantification that demand ongoing attention and work. The Inter-Agency Working Group on Evaluation, which deals with these issues, last met in June 1998. Some relevant issues were reviewed then; however, the concerted approach by the system suggested in Assembly resolution 50/120 and Council resolution 1996/42 has yet to emerge.

89. Lessons learned by the system are principally at the project and programme level and confirm conclusions drawn previously. As far as impact of the United Nations system at the country level is concerned, recipient Governments have not reported evaluating United Nations operational activities, although they are generally agreed that United Nations system operational activities contribute to their development. Several countries referred to the magnitude of resources as one important criterion by which the United Nations system is judged. The contributions made to policy development, especially in the social sectors, are being viewed favourably by many countries. Mitigating the negative social effects of economic reforms is seen as particularly important. The United Nations system is making important contributions in aid coordination and management, and helps to integrate transitional economies with the world economy.

Recommendations

90. Improved evaluation of results and use of the lessons so learned should be given priority attention throughout the United Nations development system with a view to enhancing effectiveness and transparency.

91. Future triennial comprehensive policy reviews could synthesize the evaluation results provided to the Secretary-General by relevant United Nations system organizations in order to complement impact evaluations on strategic and cross-cutting issues. The results of each organization's evaluation work and that of the Secretariat should be fed back into programme activities.

92. Organizations of the United Nations system should devote the necessary support and resources to evaluation, and should ensure that results are reflected in programmes.

93. At the request of programme countries, the United Nations system should help to strengthen national evaluation capacity and promote its use by acting, where appropriate, as Convener at the country level of evaluations of major sectors in which its international partners are involved. One of the purposes of coordinated evaluations would be simplification of the evaluation of national development programmes, harmonization of approaches both within and beyond the United Nations system, and enhanced national ownership of both the process and the results of such evaluations.

94. Country teams should be responsible for the systematic documentation and sharing of best practices related to the resident coordinator system and collaborative activities, including follow-up to global conferences, with the aim of establishing an institutional memory of field-level coordination and orienting future training and capacity-building.

X. Field-level coordination

A. Resident coordinator system

95. The field coordination of the United Nations system recognizes as a fundamental principle that recipient Governments have the primary responsibility for coordinating all external assistance with the aim of integrating such assistance into their national development activities. The resident coordinator system is engaged in supporting, where requested, this responsibility of the Government, including by supporting such mechanisms as the round-table process and forums that guide policy dialogue among development partners to ensure that all programmes are integrated with national plans and strategies. The reform measures introduced by the Secretary-General in 1997 constitute a major step forward in strengthening the resident coordinator system in accordance with General Assembly resolutions 47/199 and 50/120. The measures are being implemented within the framework of UNDG and in close coordination with the ACC Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions (CCPOQ). Although a number of decisions are not yet fully operational and some issues are still being worked out, the analysis of the implementation of Assembly resolutions 47/199 and 50/120 shows that considerable progress has been made. Thus, the resident coordinator (a) is recruited on the basis of agreed criteria and competency assessment from a wider pool from within the United Nations system; (b) is better supported by headquarters with designated focal points and by UNDG on the basis of increasing consultations with CCPOQ (mostly through its Working Group on the Resident Coordinator System); (c) is provided with dedicated resident coordinator resources for coordination activities from UNDP, and some indirect resources from other organizations; (d) is exercising broader, delegated authority; and (e) is better supported by all United Nations system organizations, often following team-building workshops and task-oriented retreats.

96. There is extensive evidence that when the resident coordinator function engages the collective responsibility of the country representatives of other organizations of the United Nations system and works towards collaborative programming, monitoring and evaluation, on the basis of team-spirit and shared purposes and objectives, operational activities are more effective and have greater impact. There are many examples of resident coordinator system teams working on the basis of those principles in all parts of the world. With the right mix of good practices, the resident coordinator system can function and achieve the expected results, even within current constraints.

97. However, much till remains to be done: greater attention needs to be given to a range of issues identified in the present report. The relationship of the resident coordinator system with the host country is a particularly important area that may need further attention, including the flow of information, the existence of government focal points for the resident coordinator system and the need in some countries for greater interest and support by Governments in the effective functioning of the resident coordinator system. Periodic consultations of the entire resident coordinator system with national partners, where such consultations do not yet exist, would be helpful in ensuring that the resident coordinator system becomes even more responsive to national priorities. There is also room to increase the participation of all relevant United Nations system partners in the resident coordinator system at the country level. In particular, ways of ensuring the full and effective inclusion of agencies without field representation in the resident coordinator system remain to be considered. Greater simplification and harmonization of procedures and more equal levels of delegated authority to the country level would also considerably strengthen the functioning of the resident coordinator system. Other concerns are the establishment of more systematic arrangements to facilitate the sharing of good practices and the building of an effective institutional memory that nurtures training, and improved selection criteria for all members of a country team. Although several steps have been taken, greater progress in these directions would be desirable.

Recommendations

98. The General Assembly may wish to take note of progress made in strengthening the resident coordinator system and encourage further progress, with particular reference to: (a) ensuring the full participation of the organizations of the United Nations system in, and support of, the resident coordinator system; (b) continuing to broaden the base of recruitment of resident coordinators and improve selection criteria and procedures, including through the use of competency assessment; (c) continuing to provide training to support team-building and leadership in substantive areas; and (d) ensuring that the resident coordinator takes fully into account the mandates and the interests of all United Nations development system organizations, particularly those without field representation. All executive heads should be urged to ensure that all United Nations system staff in programme countries are fully aware of the functioning of the resident coordinator system and

their responsibility for its effective functioning, and that they are technically qualified to provide such support.

99. All the organizations of the United Nations system should be fully engaged in the collective efforts of the resident coordinator system aimed at favouring collaborative advocacy and programming, monitoring and evaluation so as to enhance the effectiveness of the United Nations system at the field level. To that end, the participation of all United Nations organizations, in particular those without field representation, in the functioning of the resident coordinator system should be actively pursued both at headquarters and country levels.

100. The relationships of the resident coordinator system with the host country should be strengthened through greater information exchange, identification of government focal points and periodic consultations with national partners with the participation of all relevant United Nations system partners.

B. Field committees and thematic groups

101. The report of the Secretary-General on progress in the implementation of General Assembly resolution 50/120 (see E/1997/65, para. 41; see also E/1997/65/Add.2) showed that field-level committees were established in 86 of 107 countries. Room for improvement has been identified in the responses of Governments in a number of areas: (a) establishment of better integration of the activities of the resident coordinator system, with national objectives, policies and programmes; (b) better dialogue and interaction between the resident coordinator system and national partners, including increased involvement of host Governments in the activities of the resident coordinator system; (c) capacity of the resident coordinator system to facilitate resource mobilization; and (d) resident coordinator system contribution to capacity-building to enhance the Government's coordination role. The participation in the resident coordinator system of different organizations represented at the country level is not uniform. The relation with the organizations without field representation needs further improvement through enhanced communication channels. As indicated in paragraph 105 below, the delegation of authority and decentralization within the system is not yet uniform. The division of responsibility could also be improved as well as the process of simplifying and harmonizing operational procedures. Moreover, available data indicates that there is need for flexibility in the way these committees are organized. Skills in the management of effective meetings and proper follow-up contributes to the functioning of the resident coordinator system. Links to national authorities vary widely.

102. A common purpose of most field committees and thematic groups is information-sharing. When they go beyond information exchange, consultations tend most often to be policy-oriented, aimed at establishing common objectives and direction, although in some cases they implement programming tasks of a more operational nature. The involvement of United Nations system organizations, government representatives and other national and international stakeholders in the thematic working groups is not uniform. The improved functioning of the resident coordinator system appears to be closely correlated with the structure of thematic groups and their effectiveness.

Recommendations

103. The General Assembly may wish to reaffirm that field-level committees, as called for in its resolutions 47/199 and 50/120 (para. 40), should aim to establish a better integration of the resident coordinator system activities with national efforts by enhancing policy dialogue with the host Government and other development partners.

104. The United Nations system should enhance the functioning of thematic groups at the country level as one of the most vital instruments of the resident coordinator system to strengthen field-level coordination and policy dialogue by providing adequate resources.

C. Decentralization and delegation of authority

105. As detailed in addendum 1 to the present report (A/53/226/Add.1), United Nations funds and programmes have achieved a large degree of decentralization and delegation of authority, as part of the effort to enhance responsiveness to national requirements and to facilitate country-level coordination. Although most organizations of the United Nations system have moved towards decentralization and delegation of authority, the levels of that delegation have been uneven, which constitutes a constraint to joint initiatives and cooperation. The effectiveness of the resident coordinator system and coherence and coordination within the system would be considerably enhanced by greater uniformity within the system in the granting of field-level authority, in accordance with the provisions of Assembly resolution 47/199, paragraph 25. To have the desired impact, decentralization and delegation should go hand in hand with the

redeployment of staff to the field and the strengthening of field offices. Although the system is undoubtedly moving in that direction, further impetus to those efforts, in consultation with host countries, may be needed. Details are also provided in addendum 1 on the recent trends in the strengthening of country and subregional offices of the United Nations system through the redeployment of staff.

Recommendations

106. The General Assembly may wish to request further progress on harmonization of delegated authority to the field level among United Nations system organizations. It may also wish to request an assessment of the situation with respect to the various organizations in order to identify areas where further progress might be possible. This assessment could be reviewed by the Economic and Social Council.

107. In order to achieve more effective coordination within the resident coordinator system, more equal levels of decentralization, delegated authority, staff redeployment and strengthening of field offices should be pursued by all United Nations system organizations, taking into account the different operational requirements.

D. Common premises and administrative services

108. In his reform programme, the Secretary-General decided that all funds and programmes and United Nations information centres would be part of a single United Nations office under the resident coordinator, and that common premises of the United Nations at the country level would be named "United Nations House" (see A/51/950, actions 10 (b) and (c)). This initiative should, *inter alia*, serve to further the implementation of paragraph 44 of resolution 50/120, in which the Assembly requested the Joint Consultative Group on Policy and the specialized agencies to substantially raise the target for achieving common premises on the basis of cost-benefit analysis, avoiding an increased burden on host countries.

109. The range of operational support services required by United Nations system agencies active in the field is extensive. Some of these services can be provided on a common basis, regardless of the location of the agencies served; others are only feasible in conjunction with the existence or establishment of common premises. Resident coordinators emphasize that the principal rationale for common services is economies of scale permitting cost savings when service functions are carried out on behalf of a number of agencies rather than individually. They stress that regardless of where organizations are housed, common services can be achieved. It is becoming important for future coordination to develop a common information management system.

Recommendations

110. The General Assembly may wish to endorse the concept of a "United Nations house". It may also wish to call on the United Nations system to build on progress made in establishing common premises. In addition, it may wish to encourage the full integration of the concept of a "virtual house" through electronic connectivity and compatibility of software among United Nations system organizations. The Assembly may wish to take note of current initiatives within UNDG in pursuing common premises, including by taking a cost-benefit study as called for by relevant resolutions.

111. The General Assembly may wish to call for increased coordination and rationalization in developing shared administrative services and the rationalization of existing procedures. The Economic and Social Council may be asked to review progress in this area with a view to ensuring that greater coordination and cost-effectiveness are achieved.

XI. Capacity-building, national execution and related questions

112. National execution has expanded greatly in recent years as a modality for carrying out United Nations-supported programmes. National execution is widely regarded as an effective modality in the provision of support to national development and capacity-building. It promotes national ownership of development programmes supported by the system, ensures sustainability once system support ceases and helps bring national expertise to bear on system-supported activities. In recent years, the provisions of General Assembly resolutions dealing with national execution have focused primarily on the expansion of this approach by UNDP and UNFPA. UNICEF and WFP have practised national execution as part of their mandate for a number of years. The adequacy of the necessary national technical, managerial and administrative capabilities and the measures taken to make use of and to help to improve them, remain issues in some cases. The use of support units can be helpful in this respect. A particular challenge remains the complexity of United Nations system procedures. Moreover, the agencies of the system continue to raise issues

concerning their participation in the design and implementation of nationally executed projects.

Recommendations

113. The General Assembly may wish to affirm that capacity-building should be explicitly articulated as a goal of all technical assistance provided by the United Nations system. Capacity-building should be conceived of as not only human resources training but also involving development of individual organizations and the improvement of the environment in which they operate. Methods and approaches to capacity-building should benefit from the knowledge acquired and good practices shared among United Nations system organizations. To achieve this purpose, the lessons of the impact evaluation conducted in the context of the present triennial policy review should be incorporated, as appropriate, in improving current methods. Moreover, further evaluations should be conducted to achieve a broad sample of countries and sectors.

114. Since the concept of national ownership is at the core of all operational activities, capacity-building can extend to any relevant aspect of administrative or technical capacity, including that of monitoring and evaluating a society's own development. Both the programme approach and national execution should be applied as a means of enhancing the achievement of national ownership. Where necessary, measures should be introduced to facilitate the achievement of the programme approach and national execution. When assessing national capacity for carrying out national execution, the United Nations system organizations concerned should consult the recipient country. Steps should continue to be taken to increase the transparency and accountability of operational activities under the national execution modality. Whenever required, the technical competencies of United Nations system organizations should continue to be available to recipient countries within the context of national execution.

115. Further attention is needed, by the funds and programmes and by the specialized agencies of the United Nations system, to provision of appropriate support to maximize the success of national execution. This includes support to management and accountability, support on substantive issues of design, implementation and evaluation, and facilitation of work with United Nations procedures.

XII. Humanitarian assistance, rehabilitation, peace-building and development

116. In paragraph 51 of its resolution 50/120, the General Assembly called upon the United Nations system to bear in mind the specific requirements of humanitarian assistance, rehabilitation and development in its operational activities, building on its earlier resolution 46/182 on strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian emergency assistance of the United Nations. In recent years, armed conflicts in a number of countries have led to mobilization of emergency assistance programmes by the international community. The experience of those complex emergencies has made United Nations entities and other assistance providers increasingly recognize the essential interdependence of their work, whether for relief, reconstruction or development. Most respondents to the triennial policy review questionnaires emphasized the importance of that interlinkage. The matter is also examined in a separate report to the Economic and Social Council on humanitarian assistance.

117. In recent years, the United Nations has responded more frequently to complex emergency situations, especially those deriving from civil strife and armed conflict. To cope with those situations, which have afflicted as many as three dozen countries on four continents, entities of the system have been devising new capabilities and new forms of collaboration. In such situations, their efforts are geared to responding to needs for humanitarian assistance, rehabilitation and development support in a more coherent way, and becoming more cohesive and effective in post-conflict peace-building. The United Nations Secretariat, funds and programmes, agencies and other entities of the United Nations system, including the Bretton Woods institutions, are engaged in this work, under the guidance of intergovernmental bodies, and in response to requests of Governments.

118. The ideas that relief programmes can simply be phased out and replaced with a return to "normal development programmes" in post-conflict countries, and that assistance can be seen in a "relief to development continuum", have given way to a more sophisticated understanding of the relations among types of programmes and assistance providers. Humanitarian agencies are now increasingly focused on ensuring that emergency assistance can be supportive of recovery and development, taking into account the coping mechanisms of affected communities. Similarly, development assistance providers are increasingly recognizing that their early involvement in rehabilitation efforts is important to minimize disruption, to initiate and

sustain recovery, and to create conditions conducive for the return of displaced people.

119. In recent years, a number of problems have arisen during the transitional post-conflict period, when there is pressure to phase out relief programmes. Those problems highlight the need for an integrated strategic approach among all donors and for effective field-level coordination mechanisms. They also reflect the need to promote participation of development agencies in the early stages of the international response to conflict, and to accelerate the delivery of development funding in the immediate post-conflict phase.

120. A concept that is still taking shape in General Assembly resolutions and reports of the Secretary-General, post-conflict peace-building refers to actions to consolidate peace and prevent a recurrence of armed confrontation. It sets humanitarian, human rights and development activities into the larger political context, thereby helping to ensure reconciliation, reconstruction and recovery. Post-conflict peace-building, by its character and importance, is a subject that draws the attention of many entities. It is increasingly recognized that what is needed in such situations is partnerships where each entity or group can apply its capacities to parts of the problem in a consistent and coordinated manner. The different actors in the United Nations system are becoming increasingly able to meet those challenges, whether departments or agencies, executive committees or inter-agency machinery. Much more is needed however, including intergovernmental support and guidance, as appropriate, to United Nations system operational activities.

121. With experience, approaches are evolving in the coordination of assistance from the various United Nations entities. Development requirements are increasingly being taken into account at an early stage, and relief efforts are being designed to help to ensure sustainable reconstruction and facilitate rehabilitation and the continuation or resumption of development activities. This results from a growing understanding of requirements and of roles at the country level, including between the humanitarian coordinator and resident coordinator functions, and between those functions and the functions of special representatives of the Secretary-General. The Secretary-General's reform programme includes delineation of pertinent new structures and relationships in the Organization's main substantive areas of work. It is still early for analysis of their impact, but a discussion is provided in addendum 1 to the present report. One of the chief elements that has emerged is a greater sense of participatory leadership in which the various relevant entities contribute to guidelines and team efforts. Related to this is the work going forward under ACC auspices for the development of a United Nations system "strategic framework" to guide analysis and action in crisis countries, and agreement on arrangements for collaborative programming of international assistance. Also related are the joint efforts to identify functions and select candidates where the resident coordinator will also serve as humanitarian coordinator, and the coordinated efforts for mobilization of funds under the consolidated appeal processes.

122. The resident coordinator system faces particular challenges in crisis countries since United Nations system development programmes may coexist with relief and rehabilitation assistance and with political negotiations. It has become clear that those elements should inform and be informed by each other, to help ensure effective support to the peace process, where appropriate, and to support post-conflict peace-building. In two cases, the resident coordinator has been named as Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General, a model which may have merit elsewhere as well.

Recommendations

123. The General Assembly may wish to affirm the role of operational activities in situations of post-conflict, peace-building, reconstruction and rehabilitation. The effective integration of development cooperation and humanitarian assistance should be seen as an essential element in ensuring a smooth transition from relief to development.

124. There continues to be a need for a coordinated approach across the entire United Nations system that addresses the role of operational activities in the context of humanitarian assistance, reconstruction and rehabilitation. The outcome of the humanitarian segment of the substantive session of 1998 of the Economic and Social Council (particularly paras. 2, 14, 17 and 18) should form the basis of guidance by the General Assembly on the role of (a) the resident coordinator system, including the use of humanitarian coordinators or regional coordinators; (b) use of a strategic framework to guide United Nations assessments and to coordinate the various partners, including development cooperation agencies; (c) the relationship of the consolidated appeal process for emergency relief (CAP) and its relationship to other processes in operational activities, including programming and linkages with development-oriented activities. The General Assembly may wish to urge the United Nations system to clarify the link of UNDAF to the strategic framework and CAP in order to ensure sustainability of action.

125. All entities of the United Nations system, including the Bretton Woods institutions and all relevant inter-agency groups, should recognize and contribute to the interlinkage among efforts for humanitarian assistance, rehabilitation and development, and the relation of these to the larger context of post-conflict peace-building. Within the United Nations, the executive committees created under the Secretary-General's reform programme should become more interactive as concerns these issues so as to foster improved consultations, programming, resource mobilization and action. Intergovernmental deliberations on such items as the coordination of humanitarian assistance should take into account the related matters of development assistance, human rights and peace-building.

126. United Nations entities currently working for the development or improvement of analytic and programming mechanisms, including UNDAF, CAP and the United Nations system strategic framework for crisis countries, should draw upon each other for their mutual improvement and maximize their compatibility.

127. General Assembly may wish to take note of recent initiatives to clarify the linkage between the humanitarian coordinator and resident coordinator functions, and their relation to functions of special representatives of the Secretary-General so as to maximize the necessary cohesion for greater institutional effectiveness. Improved guidelines for each function should ensure appropriate improvements including in the selection of the resident coordinator and humanitarian coordinator. Normally, the resident coordinator should continue to serve as humanitarian coordinator and deputy special representative.

XIII. Technical cooperation among developing countries

128. The Economic and Social Council considered the revised guidelines for the review of policies and procedures concerning technical cooperation among developing countries (TCDC) both at its resumed session of 1997 and at the operational activities segment of its substantive session of 1998. Developing countries expressed the view that technical and economic cooperation among developing countries should be given ample focus for effectively integrating them into the global economy. It is, therefore, suggested that the triennial review also consider this important and evolving dimension of technical cooperation. The subject is broadly described in the report that was considered by the Council (E/1997/110). Of special relevance are the revised guidelines contained in its section VI, particularly the provisions for greater focus by the United Nations system to this area of development cooperation, including appropriate allocations of resources.

129. As concerns UNDP, the most recent information on the funding of TCDC activities is contained in paragraph 61 of the report on successor programming arrangements (DP/1998/34). Among the salient points are the fact that 0.5 per cent of core resources are available for TCDC. Moreover, an enhanced knowledge network through the TCDC/INRES information system is being carried out. The report also points out that nearly 50 per cent of the regional and country cooperation frameworks and programme refer to TCDC as a modality for programme implementation or as a specific activity of the programme.

Recommendation

130. The General Assembly may wish to encourage the United Nations system to continue to promote TCDC by according it the requisite resources and support in all of its operational activities. It may also wish to affirm the guiding principles contained in section VI of the above-mentioned report (E/1997/110). The full potential of TCDC/ECDC should be used to complement other forms of technical cooperation both as a programme implementation modality and as a means of strengthening South-South cooperation.

XIV. Role of agencies in the field

131. In paragraph 30 of its resolution 50/120, the General Assembly stressed the important role of specialized agencies of the United Nations system in transferring and facilitating the necessary technical and substantive expertise to support national execution. In its resolution 47/199, the Assembly had previously recognized the important role of those specialized agencies, and called for a clear division of labour so as to ensure continued appropriate support by the system for programme countries. The technical agencies are currently giving renewed attention to the question of how better to link their substantive capabilities to the conduct of operational activities. Increasingly, the policy or normative or advocacy roles for United Nations agencies are closely linked to operational activities, through advisory services, particularly in the context of substantive follow-up to global conferences. Agencies with country-level presence are becoming increasingly active in thematic groups and aid coordination arrangements of the resident coordinator system, and report that these mechanisms are good vehicles for their involvement in system-wide concerns.

132. United Nations technical agencies, as important constituents of the United Nations development system, are changing considerably. The decline of funding from their traditional partner, UNDP, had a significant effect on project execution responsibilities, programme resources and staffing. From a dominant role as executing agencies for UNDP-funded projects at the beginning of the decade, these agencies have seen their participation in country-level operational activities greatly reduced. These agencies typically have had little financial relation with other United Nations funds and programmes. The resources available consequently derive primarily from the core of their regular budget financing.

133. Some agencies have difficulties responding to demands from programme countries because they are not represented in the country team. Smaller technical agencies are maintaining direct contact with national technical agencies, but their involvement in the resident coordinator system is limited. There is a danger that they may become marginalized in the future.

Recommendations

134. Agencies of the United Nations system should continue to play an important part in operational activities, particularly by taking full advantage of their normative, research and analytical mandates and capacities. Special attention needs to be given by all concerned to ensure agency inclusion in the resident coordinator system and field-level processes, including the country strategy note and UNDAF, particularly where the agencies lack independent field representation. The provision contained in paragraph 30 of Assembly resolution 50/120 concerning transferring and facilitating the necessary technical and substantive expertise to support national execution should be more fully implemented.

XV. Cooperation with the Bretton Woods institutions

135. The importance of further strengthening cooperation between the Bretton Woods institutions and the rest of the United Nations system was recognized in General Assembly resolutions 50/227 and 51/240 and Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/43. A United Nations/Bretton Woods institutions joint exploratory review (E/1998/61) was submitted to the Council at its substantive session of 1998 in accordance with Assembly resolution 50/227. It analyses relationships in six main areas, including technical assistance, and offers recommendations for expanded collaboration at the global and country levels.

136. The present report supplements the analysis in its addendum 1 by drawing on the views expressed by Governments, the resident coordinator system and United Nations system organizations, with an emphasis on cooperation at the country level. Those responses generally favour a greater degree of cooperation, while recognizing the differences in mandates. With the growing convergence of cross-cutting concerns, such as the eradication of poverty and other priorities arising from United Nations conferences and summits, and with the decentralization of authority by the World Bank and other parts of the system, there is a recognition that increasing opportunities for country-level cooperation exist, in full consultation with the host country. The resident coordinator system is becoming more involved in supporting the policy dialogue, as foreseen in paragraph 21 of Assembly resolution 50/120. Moreover, the resident coordinator system and the representatives of the Bretton Woods institutions are increasingly engaged in the exchange of information during visits of country missions, and the sharing of data, analyses and programming frameworks. Cooperation in the follow-up to global conferences takes place within the thematic groups, which can lead to mutually supportive programming activities. Collaboration is also becoming stronger in the context of consultative group meetings, round tables and in supporting Governments' coordination responsibilities, where requested. The Bretton Woods institutions are associated with several UNDAF pilot exercises, and cooperation is foreseen in preparing the UNDAF and World Bank country assistance strategy in two pilot countries. Opportunities for further cooperation arise from the joint commitment to eradicate poverty and common concerns in a number of areas. These range from reform of public administration and achieving social inclusiveness, particularly during periods of economic reforms and adjustments, to reversing the decline in resources for development, particularly through multilateral channels. Several initiatives to exploit such opportunities are ongoing between individual United Nations organizations and with the UNDG and the World Bank.

Recommendations

137. The General Assembly may wish to take note of recent improvements in the prospects for increased complementarity and better cooperation on policies, programmes and activities between the Bretton Woods institutions and the rest of the United Nations system. In this connection, it may also wish to take into account that consideration by the Council of the above-mentioned report

on the joint exploratory review of cooperation between the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions will take place at the resumed session of the Council.

138. The Assembly may also wish to call for continued efforts to foster cooperation and dialogue among relevant institutions, particularly at country level, in the assessment of country situations, and support to the implementation of national policies and in providing development assistance. The General Assembly may wish to invite the Bretton Woods institutions and the rest of the United Nations system to maximize cooperation, consistent with the host Government's preference, while respecting their respective mandates and responsibilities. As members of ACC, though not part of the resident coordinator system, representatives of the Bretton Woods institutions should be encouraged to participate actively in the United Nations country team, including in thematic groups and field-level committees, and to maximize information-sharing and substantive dialogue in order to strengthen the follow-up to global conferences and increase the impact of United Nations system development assistance. The decentralization of World Bank responsibilities, currently in process, could be used as a further opportunity to foster closer cooperation.

139. Building on existing arrangements and consistent with host government preference, steps should be taken to strengthen cooperation among the Bretton Woods institutions and the rest of the United Nations system in support to government external resource mobilization and aid coordination efforts, including through the round-table process and consultative group mechanisms and other arrangements for policy dialogue with donors.

Notes

[1] Responses were received as follows: recipient Governments, 55; major donor Governments, including a collective response by the European Union, 17; resident coordinator system, 95; and United Nations system agencies, funds and programmes, 25. In addition, the report relied on data collected by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat in 1997 on field-level coordination, and on information obtained through the ACC Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions (CCPOQ) and the United Nations Development Group (UNDG), and other relevant bodies.

[2] The conclusions of the six impact evaluations are provided separately; the full studies are available upon request from the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Development Cooperation Policy Branch.

[3] Further information on the impact evaluations, which took place in Brazil, El Salvador, Mali, Pakistan, Uganda and Zimbabwe, is contained in a conference room paper submitted to the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 1998; individual reports can be obtained from the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. The first set of impact evaluations was supported financially by Canada, France, Ireland, Switzerland and the United Kingdom through the Trust Fund on Case Studies for Operational Activities for Development.

[4] Two pilot phases were identified by UNDG: the first phase included 11 countries: Ghana, Guatemala, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Morocco, Mozambique, Philippines, Romania, Senegal and Viet Nam; a second group of countries was added to the pilot phase, including Colombia, Kenya, India, Namibia, South Africa, Turkey and Zimbabwe.

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Triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system

Report of the Secretary-General

Addendum

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I. Field-level coordination

A. Resident coordinator system and country coordination

1. The full impact of steps taken as a result of the Secretary-General's reform measures to strengthen collaboration and coordination among United Nations system organizations and achieve a consistent response of the United Nations system to the country's development needs will require more time to take full effect. What is apparent is that the number of entities and participating organizations in the resident coordinator system is increasing, and most have separate financial and technical resources. Moreover, the demands being placed on the system are changing to involve more upstream advocacy and policy work as compared to project implementation, and new initiatives to promote strategic consultation and coordinated programming, such as the country strategy note, common country assessment and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF). Although there is a strong need for effective coordination, there is also a potential risk of overburdening the resident coordinator system with coordination tasks; the costs and benefits of coordination must, therefore, be kept in mind in assessing country-level coordination.

2. The need for coordination is becoming more evident because it seeks to ensure that recipient countries receive maximum results from scarcer resources; that the expanding advocacy mandates of each organization are carried forward in a mutually supportive and consistent framework; that despite the growing diversity the system works effectively on the basis of simplified and harmonized policies and procedure system; and that each United Nations system country team is equipped to respond rapidly and effectively to a wide range of requirements at the country level.

3. There is extensive evidence that when the resident coordinator function engages the collective responsibility of the country representatives of other organizations of the United Nations system and works towards collaborative programming, monitoring and evaluation on the basis of team-spirit and shared purposes and objectives, operational activities are more effective and have greater impact. There are many examples of resident coordinator system teams working on the basis of those principles in all parts of the world. With the right mix of good practices, the resident coordinator system can function and achieve the expected results, even within current constraints.

4. Although considerable progress has been made in improving coordination by initiating common databases, joint policy studies and policy dialogue, more progress is required, including results-oriented programming and management. The impact evaluations suggest a need to establish basic targets at the country level and a simple system to monitor and evaluate impact. The positive results achieved thus far can be summarized as follows: (a) promotion of joint advocacy has enhanced the effectiveness and impact of the United Nations support at the country level; (b) greater sharing of information and experience is taking place at an earlier stage in the decision-making process; (c) common data banks and indicators, such as the ones needed for common country assessments, are being established; (d) collaborative and joint activities involving more than one agency are increasing; and (e) responses to conferences are being pursued in a more consolidated manner.

5. Among the key constraints on improved coordination is the apparent contradiction between the increased demand placed on the resident coordinator system as a result of the changing and more complex requirements of responding to developing countries, the improved approaches and learned experience, and shrinking core resources available for United Nations system operational activities for development. That problem has been noted by a number of recipient countries, and many resident coordinators have emphasized its importance.

6. Responses by donor countries address the need for better coordination, while appreciating the progress made in that area; they emphasize the need to further strengthen the resident coordinator system.

7. Several recipient countries hold similar views. Many stress, however, that the strengthening of the resident coordinator system should not be an objective in itself but should lead to a better linkage of United Nations system activities with national objectives and improved support to national development programmes. Some comment favourably upon the effectiveness of the resident coordinator system in assisting resource mobilization efforts; others are more critical. The mobilization of external resources is considered by many recipient countries as a crucial support function for the United Nations system. Some recipient Governments express the view that the resident coordinator system has not yet realized its full potential. A few Governments have indicated that the resident coordinator system sometimes complicates dialogue between national authorities and individual agencies, and that coordination has focused on internal arrangements within the United

Nations system and less on effective relations between the system and its national partners.

8. The relationship between the resident coordinator system and the host Government was the object of an assessment provided to the Economic and Social Council in 1997. It identified a number of needed improvements: (a) an explicit government focal point for the resident coordinator system, and regular meetings between the resident coordinator system and this focal point, with agreed agenda and participation of various government organizations; (b) regular flow of information to the Government on the activities of the resident coordinator system; (c) expanded interaction between the Government and the resident coordinator system through various opportunities; and (d) capacity-building efforts to enhance the Government's coordinating role.

9. Recipient countries expressed concern that United Nations support does not always respond to national priorities, and there is inadequate participation of the Government in the activities of the resident coordinator system. In some cases, there is a need to establish better relations with the national partners. Periodic meetings with the host Government and improved consultation between the Government and members of the resident coordinator system were suggested by some countries.

10. Agencies consider the resident coordinator system as the key coordination mechanism of the United Nations system at the country level. They are becoming increasingly active participants in that mechanism, although the extent and degree of involvement is not uniform. Organizations without field representation express the fear that they risk being marginalized. The United Nations programmes and funds, especially since the introduction of reforms by the Secretary-General, are more deeply involved and committed to the functioning of the resident coordinator system. The establishment of the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) and its Executive Committee is fostering this trend at the headquarters level. United Nations system organizations agree that considerable progress has been made in strengthening the resident coordinator system: participation in consultation meetings and the launching of joint initiatives are an important achievement, and such initiatives as the country strategy note, common country assessments and UNDAF have had a positive impact on the resident coordinator system.

11. Further progress is required, according to agencies, in the following respects: (a) the need to improve the division of responsibility among United Nations system organizations within the framework of the resident coordinator system; (b) simplification and harmonization of policies and procedures within a context of decentralization; (c) a more equal level of delegated authority and decentralization of United Nations system organizations, including timely country level access to the resources of subregional offices; (d) the establishment of effective channels of communication and information between the resident coordinator and organizations without field representation; (e) special attention to the activities of the smaller technical agencies and their role in the development cooperation policies at the country levels; and (f) fuller information-sharing on the regional dimensions which are relevant at the country level, especially in the preparation of major frameworks (country strategy note or UNDAF) and when promoting the follow-up to global conferences.

1. Management of the resident coordinator system

12. The General Assembly decided in two resolutions that the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) resident representative is normally the resident coordinator (see Assembly resolutions 34/213, para. 3, and 48/209, para. 4). Moreover, the Secretary-General's report on reforms (see A/51/950, para. 152) states that UNDP continues as the manager and funder of the resident coordinator system. The resident coordinator system will be strengthened by the selection of resident coordinators from all organizations concerned. The Executive Committee on Development Operations agreed on a series of measures designed to advance this process, while identifying some areas on which further consultations are required. Subsequently, the Secretary-General reiterated his position in a letter to the members of the Executive Committee of UNDG earlier in 1998, in which he asked that they focus on common efforts to strengthen the resident coordinator system based on the legislative link between the resident coordinators and UNDP resident representatives. A number of decisions have been taken or are under active review, including the selection and appraisal of the resident coordinator on the basis of an agreed job description, reporting procedures, competency-based assessment and related actions. The Executive Committee of UNDG has agreed to review all other remaining issues.

13. The current link between resident coordinators and resident representatives was endorsed in the responses to the triennial review questionnaires. A few responses have raised issues concerning the management arrangements of the resident coordinator function, referring in particular to the need to achieve greater collective "ownership" of that function by the United Nations system as means of furthering field coordination.

14. Both the ACC Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions (CCPOQ) and UNDG agree that all members of the United Nations system country team have a dual responsibility, both as representatives of their respective organization and as members of the resident coordinator system. The notion of that dual responsibility thus applies to the resident coordinator and to all the members of the country team. Job descriptions are beginning to reflect that fact.

15. The issue of further strengthening the function of the resident coordinator is being addressed by UNDG. Among the issues being considered are the selection process, job description, the dual responsibilities of all representatives representing their organizations and being part of a team, as well as the funding of cooperative activities. Steps are being taken by UNDP to ensure appropriate handling of day-to-day operations of UNDP, whenever the workload of the resident coordinator function requires it. Specifically, all resident representatives have been instructed by the UNDP Administrator to give the highest priority to the resident coordinator system at all times and to solve any conflict in favour of the resident coordinator function. Moreover, if the resident coordinator function exceeds 75 per cent of his/her time, special arrangements are foreseen.

16. UNDG has agreed that annual work plans should be prepared collectively, including as a basis for performance evaluation of the entire resident coordinator system team. Furthermore, UNDG has agreed that there should be a shift in the resident coordinator system from inter-agency information-sharing to goal-oriented collaboration, while fully respecting the individual strengths and lead roles of each organization in their respective areas.

17. Some donors expressed the view that UNDP should continue to administer the resident coordinator system since changes in this management system would inevitably lead to losses in efficiency and effectiveness. Some support for a more participatory functioning of the resident coordinator system was indicated by a few countries. The view was also expressed that the resident coordinator should not be linked to any one organization. A few donor countries suggested that consideration be given to wider sharing of the financing of the resident coordinator system by the various United Nations organizations in addition to UNDP. One country suggested that the cost should be part of the regular budget of the United Nations system. Another country suggested that the resident coordinator should report directly to the Deputy Secretary-General.

2. Human resource management issues in the resident coordinator system

Recruitment and selection

18. Based on approaches agreed upon by CCPOQ and UNDG, steps are being taken system-wide to enlarge the "ownership" of the resident coordinator function by the system by widening the selection pool; using an advisory panel composed of representatives of organizations of the United Nations system for the selection of the resident coordinator; adopting competency-based assessments of candidates on the basis of agreed criteria and an agreed job description; and applying new appraisal procedures for resident coordinators, including the monitoring of an annual work plan formulated by the resident coordinator system at the country level. Specific results achieved in broadening recruitment are provided below. Some of the new measures will be applied for the first time late in 1998 and early in 1999; their effectiveness could be considered by the Council in 1999.

19. UNDP has the responsibility for developing post profiles for each country vacancy. It prepares a draft of the post profile in consultation with the United Nations system country team members, non-resident agencies and the host Government, as required in General Assembly resolution 50/120, paragraph 37(b).

20. Analysis of data on recruitment of resident coordinators shows that: (a) 35 per cent of the resident coordinators appointed in 1997 were from outside of UNDP, bringing the total of first assignments as resident coordinator from outside UNDP to 15; and (b) the pool of candidates for resident coordinator positions has now been widened to include, in addition to funds and programmes, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the World Health Organization (WHO). Those organizations currently submit candidates to the selection process. It should also be noted that resident coordinators and the host Governments are consulted on the formulation of a particular vacancy announcement for the resident coordinator position.

21. A special effort has been made to increase the number of women resident coordinators, pursuant to paragraph 43 of Assembly resolution 50/120; the results are shown in table 1.

22. Most donor countries consulted indicated that the selection procedure for resident coordinators should be even more transparent and should be based on a broader and

gender-balanced range of candidates, which should be accomplished by even wider consultations within the United Nations system and the introduction of an appropriate selection process.

Table 1
United Nations funds and programmes senior field-level representatives, by gender, 1995 and 1998

	1995			*1998*		
Agencies	*Female*	*Male*	***Total***	*Female*	*Male*	***Total***
United Nations resident coordinators/ UNDP resident representatives	21	110	**131**	24	107	**131**
UNICEF						
Regional Directors	4	1	**5**	3	5	**8**
Representatives	22	54	**76**	17	66	**83**
UNFPA						
Representatives	13	42	**55**	13	47	**60**
WFP	5	66	**71**	13	53	**66**

Training

23. Since the challenges before the resident coordinator system have become more difficult the training of resident coordinators and senior field representatives of the United Nations system is being improved. Under the aegis of CCPOQ, almost all United Nations system country teams participate in workshops at the United Nations Staff College, the International Training Centre of the ILO at Turin, Italy. New curricula are being developed for those workshops and for training courses aimed at both first-time and experienced resident coordinators. Furthermore, initiatives taken in several countries further those training activities through the use of retreats and local workshops.

24. Training requirements of the resident coordinator system team are being evaluated by UNDG, in cooperation with CCPOQ, including the country-level coordination workshops under the CCPOQ aegis and the United Nations Staff College. Training programmes for the resident coordinator system need to be strengthened, with emphasis on team-building, leadership and interpersonal skills and effective support to national programmes.

Workload

25. The increase since 1995 in the workload for system-wide activities, both for resident coordinators and senior United Nations representatives, reflects the strategic, upstream functions, coupled with programme and project responsibilities, as well as: (a) new initiatives of collaborative programming (such as common country assessment and UNDAF) or the intensification of other initiatives of similar nature (country strategy note, joint review of country programmes, preparing the policy dialogue with the host Government); (b) system-wide advocacy, including the coordinated preparation of, and follow-up to, global conferences and related actions; (c) promoting collaborative programmes/projects and corresponding intensification of the consultation processes; and (d) coordination of humanitarian assistance efforts, where applicable. Specific data are reviewed below; although wide variations exist among countries, there appears to be a trend towards an increase in the workload of the resident coordinator function. Similarly, there was an increase in the workload of the resident coordinator system, which affects the workload of all representatives of the United Nations system.

26. The 1995 report on the triennial comprehensive policy review (see A/50/202, paras. 138–139 and table 6) had illustrated the increasing role of the resident coordinator over the 1992–1995 period, not only in programme matters but also on security, humanitarian, common administrative and protocol issues. The time spent on the resident coordinator function was on a global average 39 per cent, with 41 per cent on UNDP activities, the remaining 20 per cent being devoted to representing various funds and programmes of the United Nations system.

27. In 1998, the time devoted to the resident coordinator function has increased in almost all programme countries. About 60 per cent of a sample of the resident coordinators consulted devote between 45 and 80 per cent of their work time to system-wide functions, while for another 25 per cent the resident coordinator function represents between 30 and 40 per cent of their time. Only 15 per cent of resident coordinators report between 15 and 30 per cent of their time devoted to that function.

28. As for the resident coordinator system workload for representatives of other United Nations system agencies, for 50 per cent of respondents it ranges between 10 and 15 per cent time, for 30 per cent of respondents it ranges between 15 and 30 per cent and for about 20 per cent of respondents it ranges from about 5 to 10 per cent.

29. The workload includes resident coordinator system functions with respect to the responsibility for security, administrative collaboration and the management of United Nations information centres, and in some countries the

coordination of humanitarian affairs (unless a special coordinator is appointed).

Performance assessment

30. Performance appraisal of resident coordinators used in 1997/1998 will benefit from a new system to be used in all organizations which identifies exceptional performance or major problems. Each organization is asked to base its appraisal on: (a) the annual work plan of the resident coordinator system; (b) the achievement of the resident coordinator system in the previous year; (c) the agreed competency framework, which defines the competencies required for successful coordination; and (d) the resident coordinator's job description, which is currently under development.

31. The competency model for the assessment of resident coordinator performance represents an attempt to establish an objective appraisal of potential candidates, requiring a competency assessment test, which should be operational by late 1998. New resident coordinator applications for 1999 vacancies will be assessed with this performance assessment, including on: (a) the ability to achieve agreed objectives; (b) stewardship skills of the United Nations system at the country-level; (c) ability to articulate a vision; (d) personal attributes; (e) team-building capacity; (f) capacity to manage relations with the Government; and (g) capacity to maintain relations with United Nations agencies.

3. The resident coordinator system and follow-up to conferences

32. Resolution 50/120, paragraph 39 addresses the role of the resident coordinator in facilitating a coherent and coordinated follow-up to major international conferences, in full consultation with national Governments. The implementation and follow-up to global conferences is a major focus of the resident coordinator system in most countries. To that end, CCPOQ agreed on specific guidance to be issued to the resident coordinator system on this subject, reflecting a system-wide position. As analysed further below, common programming frameworks and common databases are being developed, links with civil society are widening, and collaboration with Bretton Woods institutions and other partners is intensifying.

33. Based on field missions and a workshop with the participation of resident coordinators and representatives of the United Nations system and senior recipient country officials, broad, system-wide guidelines for the resident coordinator system have been finalized by CCPOQ and approved by ACC, and have been submitted to the resident coordinators and country representatives of all agencies and organizations of the system. Moreover, CCPOQ recently agreed to issue guidelines to the resident coordinator system on the field-level follow-up to global conferences, which have been presented by the Chairperson of CCPOQ at the special session of the Economic and Social Council in May 1998.

4. Field-level committees

34. More than half of the resident coordinators report that field committees review substantive activities and lead to the adoption of system-wide decisions. In a number of countries, the field-level committee functions well, reflecting the substantial engagement of the members of the country team to a system-wide approach. The field-level committee, at the senior representative level, is often supported by working groups and thematic groups.

35. Nonetheless, it is difficult to assess the extent to which real system-wide decisions and corresponding commitments of the country team with a bearing on the orientation, definition, approval and harmonization of new programmes are achieved. The experience in the functioning of the field-level committee following the introduction of UNDAF as a new mechanism to harmonize country programming will yield useful additional insights on this question.

36. In about 35 per cent of the countries examined, no formal arrangements for the participation of United Nations system organizations in the field-level committee seemed to have been adopted, even though "heads of agencies meetings" take place and help to define annual work plans. In many of those cases, the field-level committee has not been established due to limited United Nations system presence in the country or other prevailing conditions (e.g. political instability). Sometimes, the field-level committee meets but its role is very limited and does not include the review functions recommended by the General Assembly. Often, other types of arrangements for exchange of information appear to be preferred, on sectoral lines or in response to Government's demand or in coordination with other donors. In some instances, these appear to be working reasonably well.

37. In 10 per cent of the cases, the field-level committee is focused on the analysis of a number of relevant policy issues even though the committee appears more as a forum for discussion, a clearing house for information and an opportunity to promote contacts also with other partners, such as the Bretton Woods institutions, other donors and Government representatives, than a decision-making body. Although in its resolutions 47/199 and 50/120, the Assembly

highlighted the importance of the relationships with the national Government in the functioning of the field-level committee, several recipient countries have expressed the view that they wish to be more closely associated with the work of field committees.

5. Thematic working groups

38. Thematic working groups represent a modality frequently adopted to foster collaboration at the country level. In 1997, such groups could be found in 84 out of 107 programme countries. Those groups often facilitate the formulation of the country strategy note, the common country assessment or more recently, UNDAF, and they undertake coordination of follow-up to conferences.

39. Some groups include only representatives of the United Nations country team and are led by a lead agency. They play a role of internal coordination among United Nations organizations. They promote advocacy on common issues and assist the United Nations system in defining joint positions as part of the resident coordinator system. In other cases, they promote information-sharing, with limited substantive coordination. There are also cases with a wider membership, including the Bretton Woods institutions and bilateral donors or national representatives from the Government or other national entities. Sometimes the leadership is provided by the World Bank or a major bilateral donor.

40. There are a number of working groups led by national authorities; some were suggested by national authorities, others were established in response to suggestion of external partners.

41. The variety of thematic working groups depends on the different origins and tasks of each group. Standardization of these structures is not desirable. Thematic groups increase the participation of various United Nations system organizations in the resident coordinator system. Increasing utilization of thematic groups in the preparation of global frameworks, such as the country strategy note, common country assessment and UNDAF, must be noted.

6. Funding provided to resident coordinator system

42. UNDP, based on its tripartite relationship with the United Nations development system, is providing its comprehensive, global network of country offices and financial resources to support the resident coordinator system. This is done essentially through five major instruments: (a) the UNDP administrative budget; (b) special programme resources, which have been used in the past to support round tables and other aid coordination mechanisms; (c) a specific allocation from core resources to support the resident coordinator system throughout the world; (d) funds made available through UNDP country cooperation frameworks for the specific purpose of assisting Governments in better managing their official development assistance (ODA), and in the case of crisis and post-crisis countries; (e) the Executive Board has also made available a specific allocation of funds to support priority activities in the field of governance, rehabilitation and reintegration of displaced persons, mine clearance and other activities, which are linked to a broad, multisectoral approach to reconstruction and development. A few Governments have indicated a preference for a wider sharing of the cost of the resident coordinator function; this view is usually linked with other suggestions concerning the management arrangements of the resident coordinator function.

43. In 1995, the UNDP Executive Board, in its decisions 95/22 and 95/23 on the future of UNDP and on the successor programming arrangements of the 1997-1999 period, set aside 6 per cent of total UNDP allocation for resident coordinators to support the United Nations system and aid coordination. The new facility covers: (a) programme support to resident coordinator/aid coordination (1.7 per cent), which includes collaborative programming, promoting and building country-level information about United Nations global initiatives (such as facilitating national preparations and follow-up for United Nations conferences) and rationalization of common services and premises; and (b) support to United Nations system operational activities (4.3 per cent): it covers resident coordinator/resident representative activities in the following areas: support to non-UNDP programmes for which resident coordinators/resident representatives are responsible, assistance to Governments in aid coordination efforts, security related matters covering all United Nations personnel in a country, and support to United Nations system agencies for their regular and trust fund programmes.

44. A very small fraction of the total UNDP allocation for resident coordinator system funds are intended to allow resident coordinators to respond quickly to opportunities for the United Nations system collaboration. Each funded activity is designed to act as a catalyst for the development and strengthening of country coordination initiatives. Funds are also provided as seed money to facilitate joint endeavours of the United Nations system for which it is expected that United Nations agencies, donors and/or the Government will provide direct or in-kind contributions.

45. The actual distribution of the 1996 expenditures ($2,586,207) covered the following five main areas:

Areas of programme support to the resident coordinator	*Actual expenditures*	*Number of requests*
Strategic policy dialogue and instruments (country strategy note)	$338 470	38
Harmonization and coordination: thematic groups and United Nations conference follow-up	$496 879	52
Harmonization and coordination: field-level committees and collaborative programming initiatives	$600 459	60
Public information, including in the areas of United Nations conferences	$416 076	58
United Nations common premises and services	$714 323	57
Total	**$2 586 207**	

46. Resident coordinator funds enable resident coordinators to undertake a range of common activities for the United Nations field system – follow-up to global conferences, mainstreaming gender, preparation of country documents, such as UNDAF, the country strategy notes, human development reports, support for activities of the Joint and Co-sponsored United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, improving information systems and preparing information material, and other coordination facilitating initiatives – which have contributed to consolidating the resident coordinator system.

47. The funds designated by the UNDP Executive Board have so far been among the only direct contributions by other United Nations system organizations. United Nations organizations and their governing bodies have not been forthcoming in allocating resources to common activities. There is little incentive for United Nations system field offices to be more active in developing collaborative activities through pooling of resources.

B. Cooperation with the Bretton Woods institutions

48. The present report focuses on United Nations-Bretton Woods institutions relations in operational activities at the field level. The representatives of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) are increasingly associated with the United Nations country team, though they are not formally members of the resident coordinator system.

49. All groups of respondents to the questionnaires favoured greater United Nations-Bretton Woods institutions cooperation for more effective synergy of United Nations system development assistance. While recognizing differences in perspectives, mandates, structures, methods of work and resources, they generally felt that all had much to offer and much to gain through greater interaction. This was seen as increasingly important with the growing convergence of substantive concerns, especially regarding poverty and follow-up to the global conferences. World Bank decentralization of authority and stronger representation in borrower countries were universally welcomed. Also, the United Nations, through the resident coordinator system, was becoming more involved in policy dialogues among development partners, upon government request, as foreseen in paragraph 21 of resolution 50/120.

50. Recipient government respondents tended to support strengthened linkages, while respecting separate functions and emphasizing the Government's lead role. They urged greater harmonization of interventions for more effective support of national efforts. Several noted an increased Bretton Woods institutional collaboration with parts of the United Nations system that have a tradition of engagement in the social sectors and capacity-building. They urged more of this, for mutual benefit.

51. Donor government respondents focused on "comparative advantage" as a major theme. They emphasized the importance of United Nations neutrality, normative functions and mandates, work in the social sectors, and close relations with recipient Governments. The advantages of the Bretton Woods institutions were seen as resources, scale and range of operations and focus on macroeconomic issues. They urged more dialogue and synergy, rather than overlap or competition. They saw United Nations agencies as having a strong basis for collaboration but in more of a catalytic role owing to the limited resources at their disposal. Mention was made of the World Bank paper "Strategic compact: a plan for renewal", adopted by its Executive Board in 1997, which places a new emphasis on building new partnerships with other development organizations.

52. Resident coordinator system respondents emphasized that greater interaction has led to greater understanding, which has led to greater collaboration. Responses reflected a wide variety of country situations and relationships. Some countries received visiting missions from the World Bank and IMF; most others had resident staff. Aid coordination mechanisms included round tables organized by UNDP, consultative groups organized by the Bank, joint United Nations-Bretton Woods institutions support to Governments

for its relations with donors, or no regular involvement at all. In some countries, Bretton Woods institutions missions involved or informed other entities of the United Nations system; in others not. In some countries, resident Bretton Woods institutions staff had little contact with other members of the United Nations country team; in others, they were regular participants in field-level committees, shared data and findings, collaborated in common country assessments and UNDAF preparation, engaged in policy dialogue, chaired thematic groups, and/or financed joint or collateral activities. According to the resident coordinators, the most satisfactory relations were the most open. They regularly extended invitations for greater Bretton Woods institutions participation in the United Nations country team. The experiments in Viet Nam and Mali for reciprocal involvement in preparing the UNDAF and the World Bank country assistance strategy, were welcomed. While acknowledging the significance of Bretton Woods institutions mandates and resources, resident coordinators had a strong sense that the system had much to offer in a more collaborative environment.

53. Agency headquarters respondents expressed a variety of views. Some sought greater use of agency expertise in Bretton Woods institutions activities, more co-financing and more involvement in Bretton Woods institutions policy issues. Others explored the term "comparative advantage", seeing the United Nations closely involved with the evolution of the global consensus on thematic issues; associated with numerous intergovernmental bodies; mandated for work on international norms and standards, as well as increasingly on advocacy; related to many non-governmental organizations; a producer of various databases and analyses; possessing an array of specialized skills; and engaged in many forms of operational activities, especially for broad-based and people-oriented sustainable development. Agencies expressed some preference for an improved division of labour to take fuller advantage of their capacities, and they generally welcomed Bretton Woods institutions attention to issues of long-standing concern. Respondents further noted many areas of joint action. Also cited was joint membership in collaborative undertakings – the Global Environment Fund (GEF), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and UNDP; the UNAIDS Group of WHO, the World Bank, UNDP, UNFPA, UNESCO and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF); the United Nations system-wide Special Initiative on Africa, with a steering committee co-chaired by the Economic Commission for Africa, UNDP and World Bank; collaboration in countries emerging from conflict; various jointly funded programmes; and numerous task-oriented inter-agency committees and working groups.

C. Aid coordination and management

54. The United Nations development system, particularly through the resident coordinator, has long been involved in working with other partners through various mechanisms, including round tables and consultative groups. Both recipient Governments and bilateral donors have found support to aid coordination and management useful and necessary. In many cases, resident coordinators are convening regular meetings of all donor countries, often attended by ambassadors and World Bank representatives. Such meetings, convened with the consent of the host country, serve to exchange information, bring the donor community and the Government together and prepare for consultative group meetings. Non-governmental organizations are often invited to participate on relevant issues. Some countries have identified enhanced support to national responsibility in aid coordination and management as an area in which the United Nations has a clear comparative advantage.

D. Decentralization and delegation of authority

55. Nearly half of the resident coordinators report that during the past three years, delegation of authority to the country level has taken place in almost all United Nations agencies, although to different degrees. Several specialized agencies still require that policy and financial questions be referred to their regional/global headquarters for decision. There is, however, increasing convergence in the pattern of delegation of authority among the funds and programmes. As reported by many resident coordinator systems, collaborative programming and coordinated response to national priorities would be further enhanced if all entities of the United Nations system granted their field representatives the authority to approve individual projects or programmes once the general cooperation framework and overall budget envelope have been approved.

56. Decentralization and delegation of authority to the field has a positive impact on the strengthening of the resident coordinator system and on greater cooperation among United Nations system organizations. By the same token, inadequate and uneven decentralization and delegation of authority inhibits cooperation. Thus,

implementation by United Nations system agencies of common initiatives at the field level often depends on prior clearance and instructions and on support and follow-up from the respective headquarters. A number of resident coordinators confirm that the unequal delegation of authority constitutes one of the main obstacles to achieving collaborative programming and a more coherent United Nations system response to national priorities.

57. Member States favour increased decentralization and delegation of authority on both policy and financial matters to country levels and the harmonization of delegation of authority among United Nations organizations. Most call for harmonization of rules and procedures and decentralized decision-making with the aim of achieving equal levels of delegated authority as foreseen by the General Assembly in its resolution 47/199.

58. Specific action taken by the funds and programmes shows that since 1997, UNDP country offices have full delegated authority to approve, modify or cancel all core budget resources for the current programme cycle within the framework of projects included in the new country cooperation framework approved by the UNDP Executive Board (some $100 million) (excluding programme countries for which the Board has specifically mandated UNDP headquarters to approve all activities on project-by-project basis, i.e., Afghanistan, Myanmar, Iraq, Somalia, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Liberia). The proportion of UNDP field-level personnel in 1997 reached 82 per cent, compared with 18 per cent at headquarters (for comparative ratios of headquarters to field-level staff in various United Nations bodies, see table 2).

59. UNICEF has delegated authority for the approval and review of country programmes and budgets for country offices to the regional offices since 1997. Newly established programme and budget review committees review and approve at the regional level, within the overall resource envelope, the country programme management plan, including the country support budget, submitted by the country team, and submit them to headquarters for consolidation purposes only. Decentralization of budget planning and administration will be phased in over the next three years. After its implementation, the budget function in headquarters will be in areas of coordination, overall resources analysis, monitoring and oversight.

60. As of 1996, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) delegated to the country level authority to redeploy funds and revise budgets within defined limits (allotment blocks). Gradual delegation of authority was made possible by the introduction of new programming tools. In the administrative management area, UNFPA also delegated further authority to its representative.

61. For the past three years, the World Food Programme (WFP) has been undergoing an active process of decentralization and delegation of authority from headquarters to the field offices. Eight regional offices ("clusters") were created in 1997. The decentralization is being accompanied by greater out-posting of technical support staff in such areas as personnel, finance, public relations, procurement and project/programme design. The country director has authority to approve programme activities and projects within the country programme once the WFP Executive Board has approved the country programme document (which gives an outline of major areas of WFP intervention in the country and an indicative level of resources to be made available).

62. A number of specialized agencies (UNESCO, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), FAO , the ILO and WHO) have also modified their field-level operational procedures towards greater decentralization. UNESCO has delegated to its directors/ heads of field offices the overall responsibility for general administration and management matters, in particular the administration of personnel assigned to the office and financial management and disbursement. UNESCO plans to delegate additional authority for cancelling, modifying and adding activities within approved programmes, and for shifting resources within the approved budget lines of individual components of the programme and among components of a programme. UNIDO does not operate formal country programmes with earmarked resources; however, within its current reform process, steps are being initiated to delegate greater authority to field offices with regard to project development, formulation and implementation. FAO is going through a process of decentralization of its operations, with five subregional offices already established. A significant amount of authority has been delegated to regional FAO offices. The ILO is continuing to delegate authority to the field level through decentralization under its active partnership policy, under which programme/technical cooperation and delivery is based on the priority needs, problems and concerns of its constituents. In some regions, WHO is pursuing a clearer delegation of authority to the country level related to modifying and adding activities within approved programmes, shifting resources within approved budget lines.

63. In paragraph 38 (b) of resolution 47/199, the General Assembly decided that the United Nations system at the

country level should be tailored, taking into account the views of the recipient Government, to the specific developmental needs of the country in such a way that they correspond to ongoing and predicted cooperation programmes rather than to the institutional structure of the United Nations. Responses received for the preparation of the present report indicate that development challenges are becoming more complex, requiring greater cooperation and the convergence of the work of different organizations in the follow-up to global conferences. Thus, the requirements and opportunities for "shared skills" among United Nations system organizations are increasing. Current practice does not include consultations to build a "skill profile" that is complementary and promotes synergy.

Table 2
Ratio between headquarters and field-level personnel in United Nations agencies with field presence, 1992, 1995 and 1997
(Percentage of total)

	1992		1995		1997	
Agency	*Hqs*	*Field-level*	*Hqs*	*Field-level*	*Hqs*	*Field-level*
UNDP	19.3	80.7	17.3	82.7	17.8	82.2
UNFPA	62	38	55.5	44.5	42	58
UNICEF	15	85	14.6	85.4	14.5	85.5
WFP[a]	27	73	26	74	29	71
UNESCO	81	19	79	21	78	22
UNIDO	91	9	89	11	87	13
FAO	52.33	47.7	56.6	43.5	54.2	45.8
ILO	80	20	71	29	71	29
WHO	42	58	41	59	38	62

[a] WFP does not recruit project personnel.

E. Common premises

64. UNDG agreed that in defining the "United Nations House" (see A/51/950, action 10) it should be all inclusive, bringing together all staff of resident United Nations funds, programmes and (whenever feasible and cost-effective) agencies in a given country. However, during appraisal missions to study feasibility of the concept in three pilot countries, a number of constraints surfaced, such as the dearth of appropriate buildings and the high costs involved. UNDG introduced a definition of a United Nations house applicable to the funds and programmes, which will aim to house their country representatives in the designated United Nations house. Other United Nations entities and the Bretton Woods institutions are encouraged to join.

65. The UNDG Subgroup on Common Premises and Services has identified 136 countries in which United Nations funds and programmes have a presence, of which 65 have all four programmes present; the current situation is summarized in tables 3 and 4.

Table 3
Current status of premises of four funds and programmes in all countries

Type of premises	*UNDP*	*WFP*	*UNICEF*	*UNFPA*
Common	49	35	26	47
Shared	57	7	7	34
Alone	25	35	89	16
Not represented	1	57	12	37
Not applicable	4	2	2	2
Total	**136**	**136**	**136**	**136**

Table 4
Current status of offices of four funds and programmes in the 65 countries where all four have a field presence

Type of premises	*UNDP*	*WFP*	*UNICEF*	*UNFPA*
Common	35	32	13	35
Shared	24	4	1	18
Alone	6	29	51[a]	12
Total	**65**	**65**	**65**	**65**

[a] UNICEF has standing arrangements for free accommodation in a number of countries.

66. UNDG has approved a new methodology for the analysis of potential common premises and detailed work plan with specific time-frames, and has established a prioritization schedule for analysis of potential future common premises (United Nations houses) in the field, with three tiers of priorities. Ten "tier one" countries are slated to receive site missions and assessments for possible conversion into common premises during 1998; 20 "tier two" countries will be targeted for 1999; and another 20 "tier three" countries will be selected for analysis in the year 2000. Criteria for the selection of the 10 "tier one" countries

included critical lease dates, rental obligations, potential cost savings, office space issues, staffing requirements, security concerns, programmatic collaboration and geographical diversity. CCPOQ has explored the subject of common premises, and has concluded that in view of long-standing arrangements with host countries and decisions of its governing bodies, common premises are feasible only when significant cost-savings and improved working relations with the Government are evident.

67. Member States welcome and support the Secretary-General's proposal for a United Nations house and common services. They emphasize that insufficient progress has been made so far in improved effectiveness and efficiency through the establishment of common premises. They favour consolidating United Nations system presence at country level into common premises, although they want it to be done flexibly, proceeding on a case-by-case basis and taking into account local circumstances, due analysis of costs and benefits, and – in cases where the existing premises are satisfactory – by integrating the various components of the United Nations system through improved internal communication systems.

Common services

68. Common services are currently shared in a number of countries where agencies have common or shared premises. To build on that experience, CCPOQ, in cooperation with UNDG, is preparing guidelines on administrative management for the resident coordinator system.

69. The United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), as an autonomous body within the United Nations, is introducing private-sector practices in the administrative management of operational activities, which is seen as a distinct and specialized function, different from technical backstopping. UNOPS has developed expertise in recruitment and placement of experts, procurement, tendering and contracting (UNOPS has opened a procurement office at Copenhagen, which probably can be described as the United Nations procurement centre) at very competitive rates, while maintaining high standards of performance. UNOPS can also be seen as part of a new and fledgling phenomenon within the United Nations system: the phenomenon of establishing intersectoral, thematic units, such as UNAIDS, GEF and the Administrative Staff College. This trend should contribute to greater cohesion within the United Nations system.

F. Role of technical agencies in the field

70. Agencies are fully supportive of national execution but are concerned that the way it has been carried out has diminished opportunities for them to play their full part in development cooperation (for trends in grant-financed development expenditures of specialized agencies, in particular UNDP, see table 5). Modalities designed to enable them to contribute in the context of national execution have not met their expectations. Also, agencies see a tendency on the part of UNDP, the World Bank and others to build sectoral expertise parallel to or superseding theirs. Their participation in such processes as the country strategy note, the programme approach and the resident coordinator system is not uniform and does not always facilitate their involvement. Some donor Governments mention the problems of the marginalization of work of the United Nations technical agencies.

Table 5
Expenditures on grant-financed development activities by United Nations specialized and technical agencies, and UNDP share, 1986–1996
(Millions of United States dollars)

	1986	*1988*	*1990*	*1992*	*1994*	*1996*
Total[a]	1 101	1 266	1 434	1 304	1 137	876
UNDP[b]	404	451	692	371	213	144

Source: The Secretary-General's statistical reports on operational activities for development.

[a] Including FAO, IAEA, ICAO, ILO, IMO, ITC, ITU, WHO, WIPO, WMO, WTO, UNESCO, UNIDO and UPU.

[b] Including UNDP administered funds and trust funds.

71. United Nations system agencies are interested in being fully involved at the country level in strategic frameworks, such as the country strategy note and UNDAF in line with their mandates and as a means to implement cross-cutting and sectoral priorities arising from recent United Nations conferences and summits. Some agencies are emphasizing or re-emphasizing the strengthening of their field presence at country or subregional level. UNESCO has been making such placements, and the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) has been strengthening its Multinational Programming and Operational Centres into subregional centres. At the same time, however, UNDP is at an initial stage of opening a series of subregional resource facilities with the stated purpose of strengthening technical and other

support to country offices. Recently, UNIDO has taken strong steps to strengthen its field presence.

II. Strategic frameworks and programming

72. To carry out its advocacy mandates and contribute to the policy dialogue, the United Nations system has intensified its use of the various consultation mechanisms and processes that are in place, to include:

(a) Consultations within the resident coordinator system;

(b) Consultations with government representatives;

(c) Consultations with civil society;

(d) Consultations with other donors.

73. The lessons learned with the use of these mechanisms can be summarized as follows:

(a) The involvement of representatives of the United Nations system and the Government in these consultation processes varies from highly participatory to very limited, especially in the case of government representatives. Although in some countries the lead agency concept allows adequate participation of several organizations in the process, there is still a need to extend its use. In other cases, public authorities play a limited function. There is an increasing demand for an extension of system-wide consultation mechanisms to government;

(b) The consultation process is more effective when Government's participation is not limited to coordinating authorities but also extended to line authorities;

(c) System-wide responsibilities are centralized in the resident coordinator and the United Nations funds and programmes, although representatives of specialized agencies can play an important role. Regional commissions, smaller agencies and organizations with no country representatives are not being associated with country-level consultations with the same intensity;

(d) The involvement of the Bretton Woods institutions has increased, especially on information exchange and consultation on policies and programmes. The interest of the Bretton Woods institutions and the United Nations system in ensuring complementarity between respective strategic exercises has generated opportunities for collaboration, which have been intensified by the recent trend towards management decentralization in World Bank;

(e) The involvement of other development cooperation partners is deemed crucial but does not take place consistently, although there are examples where the resident coordinator system is entrusted by the host country with a special catalytic role in support of external assistance coordination, which remains a responsibility of national Government;

(f) The involvement of non-state partners in the policy dialogue with the United Nations system, although still limited to specific examples, is increasing rapidly.

Common situation analyses and country assessments

74. Joint country-based situation analyses are a key step in formulating strategic frameworks and a prerequisite for system-wide efforts to harmonize programming activities. Typically, they involve the establishment of agreed indicators and a shared database. The indicators form the basis of an analysis and assessment of trends in economic and social sectors. Each organization brings its particular expertise and mandates to a process of a joint review on such broad cross-cutting themes as poverty. Although several United Nations system organizations conduct this type of analysis individually when they programme their own activities, coordinated system-wide efforts have benefited from new initiatives of the Joint Consultative Group on Policy.

75. JCGP took the initiative in 1997 to launch the common country assessment as the basis to follow up requirements to global conferences and harmonize the system's support to national programmes. The common country assessment involves a common database and assessment, and constitutes a basic step for the country strategy note and UNDAF. Its usefulness might extend to all stages of programming. Although the country strategy note guidelines foresaw the use of a joint situation analysis, the country strategy notes so far adopted do not explicitly reflect that type of analysis. Only the introduction of UNDAF has made the common country assessment a key step in strategic programme formulation. The common country assessment could contribute to the updating of the country strategy notes and strengthen the advocacy role of the system. Resident coordinators confirm that in most programme countries, initiatives to establish a common country assessment are under way or are planned.

76. A country-specific adaptation of the common country assessment concept is proving to be essential. The common country assessment is carried out either through working groups promoted by the United Nations country team or

other country-specific initiatives. The Government's involvement in the common country assessment remains an issue. The common country assessment can enrich the dialogue with the Government and non-governmental organizations while monitoring development trends and be an area to promote national capacity-building.

A. Country strategy note

77. The country strategy note, launched by the General Assembly in its resolutions 47/199 (para. 9) and 50/120 (paras. 17 to 19), is voluntary and is prepared by the Government with the assistance of and in cooperation with the United Nations system organizations under the leadership of the resident coordinator; it has been adopted in 33 countries to date. Other approaches have been used elsewhere to provide a consistent response to the host country's needs, such as the UNDAF concept or ad hoc arrangements.

78. Table 6 compares the status of the country strategy note in 1995 to its status in May 1998.[1]

79. An assessment of the country strategy note process reveals that:

(a) When the process functions well, the country strategy note can substantially contribute to a policy dialogue, can advance advocacy of goals, and does provide a coherent and authentic frame of reference for programming;

(b) The preparation of the country strategy note promotes exchange of information among United Nations system organizations, increases their coordination and is a team-building process due to the pursuit of shared, system-wide objectives;

(c) Country strategy notes formulated in the last three years increasingly focus on the outcome of global conferences and the national commitments to implement them;

Table 6
Country strategy note status, 1995 and 1998

Number of countries	*1995*	*1998*
Country strategy note completed and adopted by Government	8	33[a]
Final draft being considered by the Government for approval	6	6[b]
Formulation process not completed or at a very initial stage	72	51
Subtotal	86	90
Government does not intend to pursue the country strategy note	6	17[c]
No decision about pursuing the country strategy note has been expressed	39	36
Total	**131**	**143**

[a] The countries are: Benin, Bolivia, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Comoros, Costa Rica, Eritrea, Georgia, Ghana, Guatemala, Guinea, Indonesia, Jamaica, Kenya, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Morocco, Mozambique, Nigeria, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Republic of Moldova, Senegal, Sudan, Thailand, Turkey, Ukraine, Viet Nam and Zambia.

[b] These countries are: Colombia, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Namibia, Niger and Syria; there were six final drafts under consideration in 1995.

[c] These countries are: Bhutan, Chile, Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Estonia, Ethiopia, India, Kuwait, Latvia, Lesotho, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Malaysia, Nepal, Poland, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and Samoa; the Governments of these countries are not necessarily opposed to the concept of the country strategy note but do not believe that, in their current circumstances, they should pursue it.

(d) In some cases, host Governments acknowledged that monitoring the country strategy note process is an integral part of their efforts to programme United Nations system activities;

(e) The support to country strategy note formulation through country workshops, such as those conducted in the framework of the United Nations Staff College, proved to be effective, given the high rate of completion of country strategy note in countries where these workshops took place. Support to capacity-building for monitoring and evaluation is also relevant.

80. A number of factors limit the value of the country strategy note and hamper its effectiveness:

(a) Country strategy note formulation is often focused on the production of the document and less on promoting a broad and inclusive policy dialogue between the

United Nations system and the Government, and within the United Nations system itself;

(b) Instead of being the initial step for a coherent programming cycle, it is often an isolated exercise without follow-up;

(c) The participation of national authorities (especially of line authorities) was sometimes inadequate, leaving the preparation of the country strategy note in the hands of the United Nations system;

(d) The participation of United Nations system organizations is not consistent. The involvement of those that are not represented in the country is, in general, limited;

(e) The excessive use of consultants to facilitate the drafting of the country strategy note in many/some cases may have reduced its ownership by the various partners;

(f) National objectives were seldom indicated as time-bound targets, with explicit mention of quantified goals or benchmarks, geographical priorities and target groups, thus making the country strategy note too general;

(g) The level of resources required for attaining the goals enumerated in the country strategy note were seldom indicated, even if a description of the contribution from system organizations was included;

(h) Monitoring, evaluation and implementation modalities were seldom indicated in systematic terms. Periodic reviews of the country strategy notes were sometimes scheduled but mechanisms to this end were not always foreseen;

(i) In some cases, the adopted country strategy note has limited impact on current activities, even though its priorities are formally recognized in agency-specific programming documents.

81. Member States express different views on the need for system-wide strategic programming frameworks and the validity of the country strategy note. The great majority of developing countries and many donor countries assess the country strategy note as a useful tool for policy dialogue. In their view, country strategy notes provide an effective strategic framework for the Government to programme and coordinate United Nations system's support and an instrument to mobilize additional resources, as well as providing a coordination tool. Some of those positive statements were made also by countries that have not yet approved a country strategy note or decided not to pursue it.

82. The following issues were emphasized by recipient countries:

(a) Inadequacy of the institutional arrangements for the follow-up phase of the country strategy note;

(b) Inadequate simplification of programming procedures of individual organizations, in particular excessive pre-programming requirements;

(c) Need for mid-term revision of the country strategy notes to appraise their impact on longer development;

(d) More flexibility should be allowed in the use of the country strategy note to meet special countries' needs;

(e) Objectively identifiable and measurable indicators should be included;

(f) Participation of civil society should be encouraged;

(g) Coordination among United Nations system organizations should be further enhanced.

83. Some developing countries express more substantive reservations on the country strategy note process, suggesting that country strategy notes are suitable only in countries with a high share of international cooperation from the United Nations system. Therefore, the voluntary approach adopted by the General Assembly in pursuing the country strategy note should be continued.

84. Donor countries also provide a mixed assessment of the country strategy note. Many note the lack of information to evaluate the impact and validity of the country strategy note, suggesting that the approach should be evaluated and revisions should be considered. Some donor countries criticize the country strategy note either as an effective basis for programming or for the way the modality is being applied (the excessive use of consultants and the inadequate treatment of the division of labour among system organizations), and suggest that the country strategy note should be overtaken or complemented by UNDAF. Others recognize the value of the country strategy note in some programme countries but not in others, and support the establishment of UNDAF. A third group of countries stress the complementary role of UNDAF, the common country assessment and the country strategy note, and believe that UNDAFs should reflect the priorities identified in the country strategy notes. Several donors have expressed regret that few recipient countries have utilized the country strategy note, which questions its overall utility.

85. Several organizations have expressed continued support for the country strategy note based on the involvement in its formulation and the contribution that that mechanism provides in facilitating policy dialogue and

advocacy at a high strategic level and orienting their own programming. Some organizations have indicated that the effectiveness of the country strategy note process depends on the Government's leadership role in the preparation phase, the availability of adequate support from the resident coordinator system and the opportunity for a productive dialogue with national authorities.

86. Others, especially those without field representation, have stressed their inadequate involvement in the country strategy note. Some have doubted the value added of the country strategy note as an inter-agency coordination mechanism, and suggested a thorough assessment of the country strategy note experience as compared with countries which did not adopt the country strategy note mechanism.

87. System organizations also stress a number of limitations in the country strategy note process:

(a) The formulation of the country strategy note has often been product-driven;

(b) The use of consultants hinders the dialogue with the Government;

(c) The final document is often too general to serve as a basis for programming;

(d) Follow-through on issues raised by the country strategy note is often inadequate, limiting its impact on the application of the programme approach;

(e) Country strategy note preparation is too complex and discourages the participation of agency staff;

(f) The approach adopted has been excessively sectoral, not suitable for tackling cross-sectoral themes;

(g) The country strategy note has neglected to set targets, time-frames and development indicators to assess progress;

(h) Scarce impact of the country strategy note on resource mobilization;

(i) Absence of a regional dimension;

(j) Inadequate reference to the activities of other donors.

B. United Nations Development Assistance Framework

88. The purpose of UNDAF is to achieve goal-oriented collaboration in preparing a single framework with common objectives and time-frame. The preparation will lead to collaborative programming and close consultation with Governments, and will include compatibility with country strategy notes, wherever they exist. The concept is being tested in 18 pilot countries (see table 7) on the basis of provisional guidelines which were presented at two informal joint meetings of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA and UNICEF.

89. In implementing the pilot phase, teams of inter-agency facilitators, after appropriate orientation training, were made available to country teams in the pilot countries to assist in the use of the provisional guidelines. A network of UNDAF focal points and antennas were identified, and training sessions took place to ensure full support to the pilot experience. The pilot UNDAFs are beginning to show the potential of this process. In one of the first countries to complete a UNDAF, the document was signed in the presence of the Government and most United Nations system organizations represented in the country, including the World Bank and IMF.

90. The UNDAF provisional guidelines foresee 10 stages:

(a) Review of national authorities' measures to translate global conference commitments and United Nations system mandates into country-level action plans;

(b) The United Nations country team initiates consultation with the Government on national priorities (country strategy note, national plans etc.);

(c) Identification of key indicators, data collection, establishment of common database;

(d) Theme groups are organized to dialogue with the Government, non-governmental organizations, donors and others;

(e) Preparation of the common country assessment document;

(f) The United Nations country team and the theme groups consult with civil society representatives, donors and others on emerging strategic programme policy issues;

(g) Relevant United Nations system lessons learned from development cooperation at country level are identified;

(h) The UNDAF document is prepared and approved by United Nations country team;

(i) Preparation of individual country programmes, review by the country team and approval in accordance with the procedures of each entity;

(j) Implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

91. Several developing and donor countries expressed support for UNDAF. Most donors considered UNDAF to be

potentially an efficient instrument for organizing United Nations system team work in the field, increasing harmonization of programming and reducing duplication. Many developing countries emphasize the potential role of UNDAF as a useful common country programming tool.

92. However, most recipient Governments reveal little awareness of UNDAF. Those who refer to UNDAF consider it premature to assess it at this time. In general, they stress that the specific requirements of each region and country, particularly the development plans of each country, should be the basis of UNDAF, and that the involvement of the Government in the formulation process requires attention. Several recipient countries wish to preserve the benefit of drawing on the individual identity, resource mobilization and technical support of each organization in the context of a single framework for programming.

93. Most donor countries and many recipient countries make specific recommendations on the UNDAF process:

(a) Following the current pilot phase, UNDAF should become the sole reference and programming document for the whole United Nations system, starting with the harmonization of programme cycles and ending with a collaborative country programming, which should substitute other programming exercises, while preserving the separate mandates of each organization;

(b) All funds and programmes, specialized agencies and Bretton Woods institutions should be involved in the UNDAF exercise from the start, as well as other stakeholders and bilateral donors;

(c) The operationalization of UNDAF by linking it to individual country programmes needs to be further explored.

94. Some agencies expressed the view that UNDAF is still conceived as a programming framework for funds and programmes only, and thus does not concern them directly. Nonetheless, some have expressed interest in participating during the formulation of UNDAFs in pilot countries.

Complementarity of the country strategy note and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework

95. Where the country strategy note exists, the United Nations Development Assistance Framework offers an opportunity for United Nations funds and programmes (possibly also other system organizations) to provide a United Nations response to an authoritative statement of national requirements, and to define and integrate support provided in a more coherent manner, while respecting the distinctiveness and specific focus of each organization (see A/51/950, paras. 50 and 72).

Table 7
UNDAF pilot phase countries

Africa	
Ghana	Country strategy note completed by Government
Kenya[a]	Country strategy note completed by Government
Madagascar[b]	Preliminary draft of country strategy note prepared
Malawi[b]	Preliminary draft of country strategy note prepared
Mali[b]	Country strategy note completed by Government
Mozambique[b]	Country strategy note completed by Government
Namibia[a]	Final draft of country strategy note being reviewed by Government
Senegal	Country strategy note completed by Government
South Africa[a]	Country strategy note process at initial stage
Zimbabwe[a]	Agreed work programme on country strategy note
Asia	
India	Government does not intend to pursue country strategy note
Philippines	Country strategy note completed by Government
Viet Nam	Country strategy note completed by Government
Arab States	
Morocco	Country strategy note completed by Government
Latin America	
Colombia[a]	Final draft of country strategy note being reviewed by Government
Guatemala	Country strategy note completed by Government
Europe and the Commmonwealth of Independent States	
Romania	Country strategy note process at initial stage
Turkey[a]	Country strategy note completed by Government

Source: United Nations Secretariat.
[a] Second group of pilot countries.
[b] Least developed country.

96. The added value of UNDAF should be its capacity to harmonize country programmes and promote or revitalize policy dialogue and consultation processes with all relevant partners, and to ensure that system-wide strategic decisions are based on a technically thorough common country

assessment. It will be important to consider simplification of programming procedures, as suggested below.

97. The relationship between the country strategy note and UNDAF is viewed by system organizations in different ways:

(a) This relationship is sometimes perceived as a comparison between demand (country strategy note) and supply (UNDAF) for United Nations system's assistance;

(b) UNDAF is expected to improve the operational efficiency of the system and expand resource mobilization, and to act as a conceptual "umbrella" for the operational activities of the system;

(c) UNDAF should emphasize the advocacy role of the system, incorporating thematic priorities, while preserving a division of labour on the basis of mandates of and possible complementarities among individual agencies;

(d) UNDAF may fill a missing link between the high strategic level of the country strategy note and the operational level of individual agency country support programmes;

(e) UNDAF is a subset of the country strategy note process or a downstream process of the country strategy note, which provides a framework for collaborative programming before each participating organization begins its own programme preparation.

98. The system organizations indicated a number of issues which require further clarification:

(a) The value added of UNDAF;

(b) The compatibility between the country strategy note and UNDAF, and the distinction between the two processes;

(c) The role of the resident coordinator and the need for training;

(d) The role of specialized agencies, the constraints on small agencies and the different treatment of funding agencies as compared with technical non-funding agencies;

(e) The specific role of consultants;

(f) The importance of the common country assessment;

(g) The role of the Government;

(h) The influence of the harmonization of programme cycles;

(i) The need to harmonize operational procedures (joint versus collaborative programming).

C. Programme approach

99. These system-wide efforts to improve consistency and the impact of programming activities should be related to efforts to harmonize the programme approach. A common interpretation of this concept was required by the General Assembly in paragraph 13 of its resolution 47/199 and paragraph 28 of its resolution 50/120. CCPOQ has agreed on issuing revised guidelines based on experience acquired to date. The operational impact of the country strategy note and UNDAF will be greatly enhanced by the use of the programme approach.

100. The value added of the country strategy note and UNDAF depends on their capability to enhance the coherence, relevance, sustainability and cost-effectiveness of United Nations system operations, favouring joint programming activities, harmonizing resource mobilization efforts and integrating system support with national efforts through fuller utilization of the programme approach.[2]

101. Although local circumstances may dictate the use of the traditional project approach, resident coordinators report a process of gradual transition from the project approach to the programme approach; or at least, the programme approach is considered a longer-term objective of all country offices. In some cases, the programme approach is not systematically applied or not applied on a system-wide basis; in others, United Nations organizations are just beginning to formulate and introduce the programme approach. The responses of recipient Governments on the utilization of the programme approach by the United Nations system show that in the majority of the cases examined, the support of the system is reported as being adequately integrated with national efforts, although more progress is still required. Indeed, in a considerable number of countries, the experience by most of the system with the approach is still inadequate and its implementation is still tentative.

D. Issues in programming: harmonization and simplification

102. The programming activities of the United Nations system can be described as parts of a cooperation programming cycle, which include the following components:

(a) Establishment of consultation mechanisms;

(b) Country situation analyses or country-based assessments;

(c) Formulation of overall strategic frameworks, which reflects national needs and priorities for the United Nations system, linking them with global agendas;

(d) Harmonization of country programmes of the United Nations funds and programmes;

(e) Promotion of the programme approach and design of system-wide mechanisms of monitoring and evaluation;

(f) Harmonization of programming cycles and simplification and harmonization of programming procedures.

103. This sequence includes the harmonization of complex policies and procedures which have evolved in each organization to translate mandates into operational programmes. These policies have sustained and given form and identity to the respective programmes and activities, and have shaped unique roles for each of these organizations in the intricate world of development cooperation. Reforms are now under way system-wide with a view to consolidating, if possible, some requirements into the new instruments of collaboration, while enhancing the effectiveness of each organization within its own responsibilities. The multiplication of joint or harmonized initiatives at the country level and the promotion of UNDAF have created a momentum to make further progress in this area.

104. Some Member States have called for simplification in the procedures for country programming, especially after the introduction of UNDAF. This demand for reform comes primarily but not exclusively from recipient countries that wish to reduce the excessive complexity of the development cooperation process. In its resolutions 47/199 and 50/120, the General Assembly calls for the simplification and harmonization of procedures. Unfortunately, the majority of the resident coordinators report that very little progress has occurred since 1995 on the specific question of the simplification and harmonization of procedures in practical day-to-day collaboration; most believe that initiatives in this regard need to be taken by relevant headquarters of United Nations system organizations. Current reforms raise expectations that simplification and harmonization can proceed in step with UNDAFs.

105. Further progress needs to be achieved in the synchronization of the programming cycle to ensure that a common strategic framework can serve all participating organizations in preparing their programmes. According to Joint Consultative Group on Policy (JCGP) decisions in 1996, 90 per cent of the respective programmes should be harmonized by the next programming cycles. Once that goal is implemented, the effective link between strategic programming frameworks and country programmes or their equivalent will be greatly facilitated.

106. As current reforms in achieving collaborative programming take hold, the processes of the United Nations system reform will require an examination of country programming experiences and the corresponding practices with a view to identifying areas for harmonization and possible process simplification. Of the range of stages by which United Nations funds and programmes develop country programming and the provisions for their implementation, it is usually the initial stage that offers the best point of departure for the consideration of objectives and procedures in terms of "elements in common", and to study possibilities of simplification on the basis of those elements.

107. A simplified illustration of the specific documentation required by the country programming of the main funds and programmes is reported in table 8, which shows the various actors involved in its preparation, the type of information required, the involvement of the Government and the provisions for interaction between organizations of the system.

E. National execution

108. In the past, national executive issues pertained principally to UNDP-funded projects, and to a lesser extent to UNFPA. WFP and UNICEF have reported full national execution for many years; other organizations have developed their own concepts in the area of execution of programmes and projects. UNDP Executive Board decisions adopted in 1992, 1996 and early 1998 introduced major shifts in funding and associated support mechanisms. In 1992, UNDP expenditure through national execution was reported at 23 per cent of total project expenditure; according to the latest data for 1997, that figure has risen to 72 per cent. UNFPA is increasing national execution, and associated technical support services help to mobilize national expertise. Greater harmonization of concepts and approaches in the system is still required, a task that is being considered by CCPOQ, which recently issued revised guidelines.

Table 8
Initial stage of country programming: comparison of four funds and programmes

Preparation of country programmes	*UNDP*	*UNFPA*	*UNICEF*	*WFP*
Common feature	When a country programme is prepared at the country level, headquarters and the Executive Board have key responsibilities in reviewing programme activities, but the process begins and ends at the country level			
Initial steps: the principal documents	Advisory note leading to the country cooperation framework (CCF)	Country population assessment (CPA)	Country note, based on position paper and draft work plan	Country strategy outline (CSO)
I. Who prepares the principal documents	Country office prepares advisory note; Government responsible for CCF	CPA is prepared by a working group chaired by national expert or public official, country office is secretariat and coordinator	Position paper by country office and draft work plan by country office in conjunction with Government	CSO prepared by country office, following dialogue with Director of host country institutions
II. What information is reviewed for preparation of the principal documents	Country strategy note, NATCAP [a] NHDR,[b] common country assessment, UNDAF, and consultations with Government and private sector	Existing studies, UNDAF, and consultations with key government officials, non-governmental organizations, and members of Executive Board	"Milestone" strategy meetings, studies, existing assessments, lessons learned in the country	Consultations with Government, United Nations system, review of linkages with country strategy note
III. Government involvement form of consultation	Advisory note is appraised by local programme appraisal committee, co-chaired by Government and UNDP; Government consults country office in preparation of CCF; Executive Board reviews CCF for approval	Working group responsible for CPA is jointly chaired by Government and UNFPA field office in consultation with Government and headquarters	Preparatory documentation for position paper and work plan, developed in consultation with Government and signed by Government and other partners, in line with Executive Board approved policies	CSO prepared by country office in collaboration with Government and technical support from headquarters; Executive Board reviews CSO
IV. Provisions for interactions with United Nations system	Advisory note and CCF require appraisal by local committee, which includes local representatives of United Nations agencies	Analytical phase of CPA involves consideration of planning and programme cycles of Government and concerned United Nations agencies, and their coordination	Work plan prepared in conjunction with Government, identifies tasks and functions, includes United Nations agencies and others	Preparation of CSO involves consultations with United Nations agencies, in context of Assembly resolution 47/199 and attention to country strategy note

[a] National technical cooperation and assessment programme.
[b] National human development report.

109. National execution is favoured by recipient Governments, although they have cited some problems with implementation. Donor Governments continue to favour the modality, although they express some caution as to local capacities and accountability. Positive aspects were summed up by all sides in terms of greater ownership, sustainability of capacity-building, promotion of self-reliance, and engagement and improvement of local expertise. Long-standing difficulties with administrative arrangements and the diversity of United Nations rules and procedures, have prompted agencies and Governments to express an interest in securing more helpful guidelines, management training and greater support to national authorities. One of the impact evaluations indicated that national execution is being supported through technical assistance staff who provide essential elements to make possible the building of capacity for planning and implementation, thus equating national execution with the national programme.

110. Administrative support from UNDP and UNOPS is welcomed by a number of recipient Governments, but donors advise caution and the establishment of exit strategies lest such support substitute for national management and ultimately impede national capacity-building and ownership.

111. United Nations agency responses emphasize that their role has become much more geared to programme and project design and related substantive work, including for UNDP-funded programmes and projects, rather than to project implementation. They reiterated the importance of United Nations system support to help ensure successful outcomes through the national execution modality.

112. The preparation of the present report coincides with the finalization of new UNDP guidelines for national execution, in which representatives of interested United Nations agencies were consulted, and CCPOQ endorsement of a system-wide text for inclusion in the CCPOQ operational activities manual. The new UNDP guidelines (UNDP/PROG/98/1) became effective in April 1998. It is obviously not possible to assess their impact at the country level. Both documents emphasize that the basic role of United Nations development programmes and activities is to support national programmes and priorities by providing financial contributions and substantive policy advice to Governments, and by helping to develop skills and technology based on the comparative advantages of the United Nations system. The focus is on strengthening national capacities and skills in order to enable Governments to fully manage the development efforts of the country and to achieve national self-reliance. The guidelines give particular attention to questions of management, accountability, support by the United Nations system, local capacities, financial management, monitoring and evaluation, and audit.

113. The UNDP guidelines reflect priorities of the UNDP Executive Board as expressed in its decision 98/2, and respond to points made by the United Nations auditors concerning accountability. Those guidelines foresee the assessment of capacity for national execution by focusing on technical, managerial, administrative and financial capabilities. Where such capacities are inadequate, provision is made for them to be improved with support from UNDP and other United Nations system organizations. Regarding establishment of management support units or other UNDP-financed support services at the country level, the guidelines make specific arrangements.

III. Humanitarian assistance, rehabilitation and development

114. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) on humanitarian assistance has taken the lead in developing a more strategic and coordinated approach to crisis situations. This includes putting in place coordination mechanisms at the field level, and developing the Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP) as an effective programming instrument, closely linked to the planning and funding of rehabilitation and development programmes. This is important, since otherwise emergency programmes may come to an end without adequate arrangements to ensure the livelihoods of those who depended on them. Similarly, development agencies are having to review their programming and funding systems, in consultation with donors. That donors often support humanitarian and development programmes from different funding windows is a factor which must also be addressed in this context.

115. The Secretary-General's reform programme (see A/51/950) instituted a number of relevant changes. The Department of Humanitarian Affairs was divested of operational responsibilities and reconstituted as the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs; liaison between the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Department of Political Affairs and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the United Nations Development Group was strengthened; some functions related to natural disaster were transferred to UNDP; functions related to landmines were transferred to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and UNDP; the role of IASC as the focal point for coordinated humanitarian initiatives was reinforced; the consolidated appeals process was extended to include resource requirements for

rehabilitation activities; and the importance of human rights concerns in conflict situations has led to the systematic participation of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in inter-agency actions. The resident coordinator increasingly performs the function of humanitarian coordinator; issues pertaining to this role are being reviewed by IASC. In the new procedures for selection of resident coordinators, particular attention is to be paid to candidates that meet the requirements for humanitarian coordination, where needed.

116. In their questionnaire responses, donor Governments emphasized the importance of interconnection – among actions on the ground and among United Nations and other agencies – to help support relief, rehabilitation and recovery. They welcomed steps by the United Nations system to adopt a more comprehensive approach for countries in special circumstances. Several noted some stress and overlap in United Nations efforts, from which their own bilateral programmes also sometimes suffered, especially when activities could not clearly be defined as either strictly humanitarian or developmental.

117. Responses from the resident coordinator system reflected United Nations efforts to cope with crisis and post-crisis situations in as many as three dozen countries on four continents. Many emphasized that development issues have an impact on a conflict situation, and that the mix of skills from around the United Nations system could be brought to bear to minimize destruction and displacements and hasten recovery. In such cases, thematic groups and inter-agency coordination committees were important and met frequently. Also evident was the evolution of development concerns, including early planning for economic recovery, with special attention to vulnerable and/or previously hostile groups. While inter-agency field-level cohesiveness was evident, so also were problems arising from separateness of agency identities, especially as perceived in relation to agency headquarters. Resident coordinator responses also emphasized the importance of adopting a longer-term perspective; the United Nations system's common response capabilities; capacity-building and governance; strengthening of national ownership and oversight; decentralization; civil society; and working with bilateral and other donors.

118. United Nations agency responses indicated considerable growth of activities and policy attention in the past three years. For example, the UNDP programming system approved in 1995 included a portion specifically for the development of strategic frameworks for recovery and special programme initiatives, immediate support for coordinated and urgent response to crisis, and capacity-building in "countries in special situations". UNDP estimated that 35 per cent of its core resources are currently targeted for work in such countries.

119. The involvement of WFP in recovery aims to help crisis-affected people to stabilize livelihoods, strengthen positive coping mechanisms and resume the development process. This approach seeks opportunities for introducing development activities and strengthening the capacities of vulnerable populations in the hope of contributing to the prevention of conflict and emergencies. As a consequence, WFP interventions are case-specific, with assistance for relief, recovery and/or development being provided at any one time in a given country. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) noted that unless its reintegration efforts (material assistance, infrastructural rehabilitation, local capacity-building) formed part of an integrated international rehabilitation and reconstruction strategy, their impact was likely to be insufficient, circumscribed and short-lived.

120. FAO, active in food security and rural development, obtained clarification of its role and policies in the area of humanitarian assistance in 1996, through the FAO Council and the World Food Summit Plan of Action. UNICEF noted its special capability deriving from a focus on relief and development in a mutually reinforcing manner, its continuous in-country presence, and its programming partnerships with Governments and communities. The United Nations Centre for Human Settlements reported an increasing involvement in programmes involving the reconstruction of physical infrastructure and services; promoting improved governance, especially at local levels; and restoring community institutions. UNFPA reported that it is increasingly responsive to crisis and refugee situations and violence against women, including Board-approved policy guidelines and special programmes, and new collaborative efforts and agreements within and outside the United Nations system. UNOPS is also providing administrative support in rehabilitation and social sustainability, and has established a unit for that purpose at Geneva. The War-torn Societies Project, associated with the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, has sponsored ground-breaking studies and workshops. As for the World Bank, in 1997 it formulated and deliberated a framework document for its involvement in post-conflict reconstruction, including lending and other operations; established a post-conflict unit in its Social Development Department, and obtained Board approval for a related programme under the Development Grant Facility. Notable in the framework paper were the many specific references to partnership with the rest of the United Nations system.

IV. Post-conflict peace-building

121. The General Assembly has addressed the subject of post-conflict peace-building in its resolutions 47/120, 51/240 and 51/242. The report of the Secretary-General on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa (A/52/871-S/1998/318) brings forth a number of issues and ideas on the subject.

122. United Nations reforms include provisions to strengthen cohesion for peace-building. Thus, in countries where field operations are in place, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General has authority over all United Nations entities, including force commanders, civilian police commissioners, resident coordinators and humanitarian coordinators. At Headquarters, the Department of Political Affairs in its capacity as convener of the Executive Committee on Peace and Security (ECPS) is the United Nations focal point for peace-building and works closely with other departments and entities of the United Nations system; further internal guidelines in this area are being developed. ECPS, in collaboration with other executive committees, has responsibility for design and implementation of peace-building initiatives. Consistent with this, the Department of Political Affairs and ECPS have undertaken several preliminary steps on focal point and consultative arrangements, including in relation to the Great Lakes region of Africa. Other aspects of the United Nations reforms, in the areas of development cooperation, humanitarian affairs and human rights, are also pertinent.

123. ACC is currently giving considerable attention to the elaboration of a strategic framework to guide United Nations system assessments and actions and ensure necessary linkages. At its April 1997 session, ACC agreed in principle to the concept on the basis of prior work by CCPOQ, and identified one country for testing the idea. At its April 1998 session, ACC considered a draft strategic framework for Afghanistan, as well as a draft of generic guidelines for dealing with such situations. ACC acknowledged the difficult circumstances of the country and this effort, agreed on priorities for next steps and welcomed the Secretary-General's decision that the Deputy Secretary-General would steer further development of the initiative. Issues raised in ACC included the ownership of the process, both by the United Nations system and by the people of Afghanistan and their institutions; problems concerning gender, drug control, population displacements, landmines and international recognition of the national authorities; the relation of assistance efforts and political efforts; the contributions of existing United Nations mechanisms, including CCPOQ, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, UNDAF, the Consolidated Appeals Process etc.; the need for the strategic framework documentation to be comprehensive yet easy to use; and the importance of showing early practical benefits.

124. Concurrent and linked with the work from Headquarters and ACC, a framework of organizational relationships for international assistance to Afghanistan has been developed at the field level, led by the resident coordinator/humanitarian coordinator and involving United Nations organizations and agencies, bilateral and multilateral donors, non-governmental organizations and Afghans. Entitled "Making a reality of principled common programming", it was welcomed at the May 1998 meeting of the Afghan support group of donors.

125. In its resolution 51/242, the General Assembly noted that the multidimensional nature of peace-building demands effective coordination. Studies prepared by the United Nations Secretariat on lessons learned point to the difficulties and challenges involved. As a new step, the first United Nations peace-building support office has been established since early 1998 in Liberia. As agreed with the Government and members of the Security Council, the office is intended to strengthen and harmonize United Nations peace-building efforts; help to mobilize international political support for the country's reconstruction and recovery; facilitate the technical assistance efforts of the resident coordinator and the United Nations country team; and assist local efforts for reconciliation, establishment of democratic institutions and respect for human rights. The office is headed by a representative of the Secretary-General, supported by the Department of Political Affairs, who is responsible for ensuring a consistent policy approach by the entire United Nations system and for maintaining consultations with key partners, including the Government, international financial institutions and other major donors. The resident coordinator in Liberia serves as deputy to the representative, in addition to existing functions, including humanitarian coordination. The resident coordinator is to keep the representative informed about relevant United Nations work and initiatives, continues to coordinate United Nations operational activities for development, and will provide continuity once the mandate of the office has ended. As indicated in the recent report of the Secretary-General on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa (A/52/871-S/1998/318), it is hoped that similar support structures may be established in other cases.

126. Resident coordinator questionnaire respondents described United Nations work for planning recovery, landmines clearance, resettlement and reintegration of populations, preparations for elections, strengthening of

judiciary and police, revamping of administrative structures, conducting workshops on reconciliation, mobilizing inter-agency area-based development programmes etc. Coordination of United Nations system assessment, planning, and implementation of relief and rehabilitation activities was frequently noted as important, both for the United Nations and in its relations with other actors.

127. Special representatives of the Secretary-General were assigned to a number of the countries reviewed. Resident coordinators reported that a separation prevails between the political and relief and development operations in some cases; in others, political and operational issues are seen as linked by local authorities and assistance providers. In one instance of the latter, the Special Representative was invited to chair a coordinating council for the conduct of peace negotiations, and appointed representatives of UNDP, UNHCR and the military observer mission to lead working groups on socio-economic rehabilitation, refugee repatriation and security issues. In another country, "cooperation for development" is one objective of the peacekeeping mission, and the resident coordinator serves as Deputy Special Representative. In another country, the contesting parties and the Special Representative invited various United Nations entities to support the political and socio-economic aspects of the peace agreements, including technical inputs to their design and arrangements to verify their implementation.

128. Among United Nations agency commentaries, UNESCO cited General Assembly resolution 52/13 on a culture of peace, on which a full report will be submitted to the General Assembly at its next session, and UNICEF cited Assembly resolution 52/107 on the rights of the child; both address needs of vulnerable groups. The World Bank described its new framework for the introduction of programmes in countries emerging from conflict, which focuses on preparing a support strategy, including partnership with the United Nations and others, and moving to agreements with national authorities for reconstruction activities, as conditions allow. UNDP provided much information on its growing role in crisis and post-conflict situations, including helping to devise specific frameworks for assistance to reconstruction, helping to mobilize international resources, and building new inter-agency partnership linkages.

129. Donor responses emphasized that reconstruction and rehabilitation operate in a delicate political environment, and therefore all parties should adhere to a common framework. They called for a coordinated approach to peace-building, making use of ACC machinery, to guide country-specific actions.

V. Regional dimensions of operational activities

130. As mandated, operational activities focus primarily at the country level. The vast proportion of those activities is organized within individual countries. A relatively small proportion (10 to 15 per cent in terms of total resources) is undertaken at the regional and subregional levels. Although relatively small in financial terms, those regional and subregional operational activities offer broader perspectives and open up new opportunities for generating productive forms of multilateral action, especially important to transboundary development cooperation and for peace-building. The United Nations system has important comparative advantages in this respect: its objectivity, neutrality and acceptability in dealing with sensitive questions, particularly important when managing intercountry issues; its access to intersectoral resources and global and regional databases; its systems of grant funding; its role in setting norms and standards on a global and regional scale; and its growing intercountry technical support and managerial structures.

131. Subregional and regional intergovernmental organizations have emerged in increasing numbers, with which United Nations organizations have established a varied pattern of relationships and linkages. While these bodies are of diverse nature, they typically pursue the aim of finding common solutions to complex transboundary issues in a spirit of multilateral cooperation. The United Nations system has helped to strengthen their structures and technical capacities, and assists in developing and shaping their agendas and advising on policy issues.

132. Regional and subregional development cooperation offers a range of opportunities for enhancing the development prospects of individual countries. Objectives pursued by these activities include economies of scale; complementarity to country-level action; addressing multi-country common problem areas; exchange of experience; addressing transboundary issues; facilitating economic integration; building and strengthening regional institutions of all types; advancing global, regional and subregional mandates; enabling advocacy and policy development; and as instruments for resource mobilization. Regional and subregional structures and cooperation facilitate exchange of information.

133. The growing technical strengths of United Nations system regional and subregional facilities offer cost-effective support to development processes at the country level, and for stimulating regional technical cooperation

among developing countries. The increasing United Nations involvement in advocacy and policy development in sustainable human development might be pursued more actively at the subregional and regional levels. There is also the distinct prospect of mobilizing both technical and financial resources from non-traditional sources through these regional and subregional approaches.

134. The many stakeholders in intercountry operational activities – recipient Governments, donors, United Nations organizations, including regional commissions, and intergovernmental organizations at the regional and subregional level – hold a range of views on the nature of the future of regional and subregional cooperation. Stakeholders are concerned with the issues of complementarity and linkage between country and intercountry activities; coordination of intercountry operations; the role of regional commissions; expanding the prospect for technical cooperation among developing countries; and establishing closer working relationships between United Nations regional and subregional organizations and non-United Nations regional and subregional intergovernmental bodies.

VI. Evaluation

135. In General Assembly resolution 50/120 and subsequent Economic and Social Council resolutions, notably Council resolution 1996/42, the United Nations system was called upon to ensure improvements in monitoring; coordinate programme reviews and evaluations; apply lessons learned systematically; build evaluation criteria into all projects and programmes; and promote national evaluation capacity and provide the Economic and Social Council with information on evaluation activities that is quantifiable and comparable. All funds, programmes and agencies of the United Nations development system were also urged to identify measurable targets, strengthen their monitoring and evaluation capabilities, incorporate those targets in plans to implement Assembly resolution 50/120 and cooperate in the development of monitoring and evaluation methodologies.

136. The system is responding to the guidance from the General Assembly on issues of monitoring and evaluation. There have been some instances of joint evaluations. One or two agencies have been active in supporting development of national evaluation capacity. However, the overall response remains incomplete, and continued attention by the Assembly to this issue appears to be necessary.

137. Few, if any, agencies responded to the need for established targets referred to in Council resolution 1996/42. In addition, movement towards holding joint programme reviews rather than separate exercises has been slow, although the introduction of UNDAF may encourage at least the funds and programmes to move in this direction. Only limited information on achievements in terms of impact and effectiveness was provided by United Nations organizations. Different United Nations entities report on the results that they have achieved in different ways, reflecting the variation in product, style and role that exists within the United Nations development system.

138. UNICEF reports in quantified terms on achievements in relation to goals of the Declaration and Plan of Action of the 1990 World Summit for Children and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

139. Other agencies, such as the International Trade Centre, refer to increased awareness of trade rules in the business community and improved competitiveness of enterprises and capacities in trade promotion.

140. The United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) provided data on achievements in terms of drug demand reduction and supply reduction in specific geographical areas.

141. UNDP's report on project evaluations indicates 83 per cent of its projects had a positive impact on final recipients and 84 per cent had a positive impact in terms of capacity-building. Moreover, UNDP's substantive capacity in the areas of environment and governance is increasingly recognized and that its annual Human Development Report contributes to the process of making development thinking and policies focus on people.

142. UNFPA indicated that it conducted five thematic evaluations in the 1995–1997 period and initiated two more recently.

143. WFP reported that although no quantitative data are available, its emergency relief aid saved many lives and significant numbers of people were supported in returning to normal civilian life. Its food aid has a positive effect on household food security and provides short-term employment. In the context of structural adjustment, it mitigates the negative effects of the adjustment process on the poor.

144. WHO evaluates its activities in terms of the Health For All initiative, though a detailed record of performance achieved is not available. However, evaluations of major programmes on essential drugs make detailed estimates of achievement.

145. FAO reports evaluation results emanating from some 148 projects, a review of special relief operations and a thematic evaluation of food quality control. UNIDO notes that it moved upstream to a global forum role and points to specific achievements with regard to small and medium enterprises, especially in Africa, and in the brokering of $800 million investments in 1996.

146. Thus, overall, although there is an authentic reporting of results it is not yet done in the comparable terms requested by the Council in its resolution 1996/42. There are some genuine methodological problems here of measurement and quantification, which demand ongoing attention and work. There is thus scope for work within the system on these issues with a view to providing greater transparency on how United Nations entities measure and assess their own performance.

147. Lessons learned by the system are principally at the project and programme level rather than at the national or strategic level, and many are similar to conclusions drawn previously. Thus, there is little evidence of progress in this area. The Inter-Agency Working Group on Evaluation, which could provide the necessary leadership on a variety of evaluation issues, last met in June 1998. Some relevant issues were reviewed then; however, the concerted approach by the system suggested in General Assembly resolution 50/120 and Council resolution 1996/42 has yet to emerge.

148. At the field level, more than half the responses from the resident coordinator system provide detailed information on evaluation activities. Several general conclusions emerge. There are no common criteria for the resident coordinator system to adopt for evaluations of their projects and programmes. The focus is largely on evaluation work undertaken by individual agencies. There are only few instances of joint evaluation by United Nations system organizations. There is little evidence that the system has moved to carrying out programme reviews and evaluations jointly and in a coordinated fashion. Each agency appears to insist on evaluating "its" programme for reasons of accountability and visibility, even though joint evaluations could promote lesson learning, economize on scarce national resources, and focus attention on the relevant national concern or programmes. The lesson learning and accountability for performance aspects of evaluation remain underemphasized.

149. There is an ongoing process of capacity-building in the field of evaluation at the country level. Only a few countries have requested specific assistance in upgrading and improving their evaluation practices but capacity- building is taking place, both formally and informally, through a variety of interactions between government and United Nations organizations at the field level. The increasing attention by the United Nations system to developing databases and benchmark indicators has assisted governments in their own approaches to evaluations. Individual United Nations organizations work closely with specific agencies of governments, to upgrade evaluation methodologies. A key area for United Nations inter-organizational collaboration in the field of evaluation is information-sharing on the basis of results of evaluations.

150. As far as impact of the United Nations system at the country level is concerned, recipient governments have not reported evaluating of United Nations operational activities, although they are generally agreed that United Nations system operational activities contribute to their development. Several countries referred to the magnitude of resources as one important criterion by which the United Nations system is judged. The contributions made to policy development, especially in the social sectors, are being viewed favourably by many countries. Mitigating the negative social effects of economic reforms is seen as particularly important. The United Nations system is making important contributions in aid coordination and management, and helps to integrate transitional economies with the world economy.

151. Donor countries have undertaken a few evaluations of United Nations operational activities, joint evaluation by Canada, Finland and Germany of UNFPA work; Germany's evaluation of trust fund projects of UNDCP in Peru; evaluation of United Nations field system in Thailand and Viet Nam by the United Kingdom; evaluation of UNDP by the United States of America. Apart from these activities, donors also have obtained their knowledge of the impact of the United Nations system activities from other sources.

152. Judgements on impact and effectiveness seem to depend on the understanding of the comparative advantage of the United Nations system. The comparative advantage was seen as: neutrality; as a programme country's advocate; as sound management and cost-effectiveness; as focusing on social sectors such as education, public health, food security, human rights, crisis prevention and entrepreneurship; as focusing on the areas of poverty, eradication governance, and environment; in capacity development and policy advocacy. The considerable programme experience and extensive field networks is considered as important.

153. The impact of the United Nations system is also seen as most effective when there is a clear mandate. Many donors indicated that coordination among United Nations organizations is an important factor. There is also a

recognition of the importance of greater coherence between United Nations normative and operational activities. Decentralization of authority to the field level was seen as a critical factor. Design of projects and quality of implementation, and improvement of monitoring and evaluation also received mention in donor responses. There is considerable scope for exchange of experience and information on best practices.

VII. Resources and funding

154. The contribution to core resources of UNDP[4] has declined in the last three years by nearly 10 per cent, from US$ 943 million in 1994 to $911 million in 1995 and $855 million in 1996. Core contributions to UNDP-administered funds and trust funds have also been largely static, at $64 million in 1994, $78 million in 1995 and $56 million in 1996. Non-core contributions to UNDP and UNDP-administered funds by major donors have increased marginally, decreasing from $189 million in 1994 to $169 million in 1995, and increasing to $244 million in 1996. The marginal increase of non-core funds has not compensated adequately for the decline in core contributions by major donors. UNDP and UNDP-administered funds have mobilized significant amounts of non-core resources from countries other than major donors. Total non-core resources mobilized amount to $687 million in 1994, $715 million in 1995 and $944 million in 1996. About 60 per cent of those non-core resources have been mobilized from 15 countries in Latin America. Most of those non-core funds do not fall into the category of ODA. Total resources available to UNDP increased from $1,694 million in 1994 to $1,704 million in 1995 and $1,855 million in 1996.

155. Core resources available to UNICEF[4] have declined 20 per cent in the three years 1994 to 1996. From $679 million in 1994, it declined to $542 million in 1995 and $516 million in 1996. In compensation for this decline, there has been a significant increase in non-core resources, from $327 million in 1994 to $464 million in 1995 and $425 million in 1996. Total core and non-core resources available to UNICEF amounted to $1,006 million in 1994, $1,007 million in 1995 and $941 million in 1996.

156. Contributions to UNFPA[4] can be described as stable over the last three years. Core resources amounted to $255 million in 1994, $305 million in 1995 and $232 million in 1996. Other resources increased from $11 million in 1994 to $32 million in 1995 and $43 million in 1996. Total UNFPA resources amounted to $265 million in 1994, $337 million in 1995 and $275 million in 1996.

157. Contributions to WFP[4] in the last three years have amounted to $1,515 million in 1994, $1,282 million in 1995 and $1,333 million in 1996. Nearly 70 per cent of WFP resources have been targeted for humanitarian and emergency purposes, leaving the balance to support development activities. Contributions to other United Nations funds and programmes have declined in the last three years, from $78 million in 1994 to $70 million in 1995 and $70 million in 1996.

158. Total resources available from donor and non-donor sources, in the form of contributions to core and non-core resources and including ODA and non-ODA components to United Nations funds and programmes, amounted to $4.6 billion in 1994, $4.4 billion in 1995 and $4.5 billion in 1996. The overall picture is that resources available to United Nations funds and programmes have declined. The core resources available have declined more sharply than total resources. Africa receives nearly 40 per cent of all United Nations system resources, Asia and the Pacific 22 per cent, Latin America 22 per cent, Europe 6.6 per cent, and West Asia 6 per cent.

159. ODA from United Nations funds and programmes is widely distributed among 130 countries. The country coverage of United Nations operational activities far exceeds that of any other bilateral or multilateral organization. The significance of United Nations funds and programmes as a percentage of total ODA receipts by individual countries varies extensively between countries. In Africa, more than 20 countries received United Nations assistance in excess of 10 per cent of their total ODA receipts in 1996, six of those received assistance amounting to 20 per cent of ODA. In Asia, nine countries received United Nations assistance in excess of 10 per cent of ODA in 1996, while in Europe and the CIS States only three countries and in Latin America five countries received similar levels of assistance in 1996 (for more detailed information, see E/1997/65/Add.1 and A/52/431).

160. The UNDP/UNFPA Executive Board has established an open-ended ad hoc working group for UNDP to develop a sustainable funding strategy. The Board recognized the importance of non-core resources in UNDP's overall strategy for resource mobilization. Concerning UNFPA, the Board is seeking ways on the basis of the intergovernmental agreement reached at the International Conference on Population and Development in 1994, of placing funding on a more secure basis. UNICEF has considered funding issues, especially in relation to questions such as burden-sharing and multi-year pledges. The WFP Board is also reviewing its experience with long-term funding arrangements. It is

expected that consideration of this subject will lead to progress in this area by September 1998.

161. In submitting their comments for the triennial review, Member States, both donors and recipients, have expressed their strong commitment to United Nations system operational activities for development but expressed concern about current trends in core resources. Ideas contained in the note by the Secretary-General (A/52/847) should be explored by the Executive Boards and the General Assembly. The outcome of the review of the funding issues at the level of the Executive Boards carried out in accordance with Assembly resolutions 52/12 B, 50/227 and paragraph 10 of Assembly resolution 50/120 will undoubtedly have a major bearing on the current triennial policy review.

Notes

[1] The total number of countries for which information is available has considerably increased since 1995, from 131 to a total of 143 countries in 1998; the samples are, therefore, not completely homogeneous. However, the information on active country strategy notes refers to countries which were included in both dates, which makes the increase of the adopted country strategy notes still meaningful.

[2] See ACC/1993/10; see also recommendations of a workshop on the theme "Best practices in the resident coordinator system and related matters", Turin, 18-21 February 1997.

[3] A separate conference room paper will contain the major conclusions of the six impact evaluation studies.

[4] For details, see E/1998/48/Add. 1; conclusions are reported if received in the calendar year.